

*Christian
A Dangerous
Title to Claim*

Jeremy B. Strang

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~ *Accountability* ~

Thank you for your purchase of this book.
All proceeds and royalties go to persecuted Christians
and indigenous missionaries around the world.

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*“Pretending the poor and lost do not exist may be an
alternative. But averting our eyes from the truth will not eliminate
our guilt.”¹*

~ K.P. Yohannan ~

¹ Revolution in World Missions, pg 193

~ To you be the glory ~

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! You are all that I need! I don't need a method, a program, works or even this book. All I need is the person and truth of who you are, Jesus! May this book be empowered by your Holy Spirit. May you reveal the *full* truth of your glory to everyone who reads. May this give great glory and honor to you, Father.

Jesus, you are my power, my hope, my strength, my joy, my song, my peace, my patience, my way, my truth, my life, my deliverer, my salvation and most of all my LORD! I can do no good thing without you! All praise, glory and honor belong to you alone!

I dedicate this book to my wife and children. May I always apply the Word of God to myself first and then extend His love to you.

May this book give great glory to the Bridegroom and build up His Bride for the preparation of that great wedding day.

Lord, may you break my heart over the things that break Yours. May it be that you show me the vileness of my sin. May I love the souls of the lost no matter what the cost may be to myself. If the name Jeremy B. Strang ceases to exist, so be it; let it turn to dust, so long as the name and person of your dear Son, Jesus, is extolled above every name, above every creature and above every created thing.

Amen.

~ *Thank you* ~

A special thank you goes out to my brothers and sisters in Christ: Chaplain Jim and Paula Combs, Terry and Cindy Light, Marianne Lordi, Pastor Steve Shullanberger, Eric and Katie Snavelly for proof reading, parts if not all, of this book. I know that you probably had much better things to be doing, but you gave your time to helping me with this project. I am eternally grateful and blessed to have you as friends, and more so, family in Christ. As you all know, it really is not me who you have helped, but rather you were patiently obedient, and that to the Lord of Glory. May His Church be built to withstand all the flaming darts of the evil one!

~ *To my children* ~

Please do not accept anything that has the label ‘*christianity*’ unless you first inspect it thoroughly. Test everything in comparison to the Scriptures and in submission to the Holy Spirit. Avoid useless religion, opinions and vain talk. Seek to know God intimately. Do not be deceived by crafty, smooth talking, half-truth preachers and Scripture twisting politicians. Dedicate yourselves to the Gospel of truth. Hold fast to the truth, for everything else in life is meaningless if Christ is not your center. Love for the souls of mankind is to be at your forethoughts throughout your life. Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ Jesus the Lord.² “*If sinners entice you, do not consent.*”³ “*Hold back your foot from*” the paths of wickedness and those who choose evil.⁴ Repent when God reproves you.⁵ If God does not reprove you, be afraid, because you are not His.⁶ Remember, your best friends are the ones who tell you the most truth, whether you like it or not.⁷

With Christ’s abounding love,

Your Daddy.

² 2 Corinthians 10:5-6

³ Proverbs 1:10

⁴ Proverbs 1:15

⁵ Proverbs 1:23

⁶ Hebrews 12:6; Revelation 3:19; Psalm 51:8, 94:12, 119:67, 75

⁷ Thought owed to Brother Paul Washer – HeartCry Missionary Society

~ Word from the author ~

I am not a brave man, nor a wise man. Any wisdom, knowledge or power found in my mouth, in my writing or in my deeds is only because of the sovereign grace of God, the propitiation of Christ Jesus and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. I can claim no good thing of myself. If it were not for the mercy of God and the new birth wrought by the Holy Spirit, by way of Christ's death on the cross, I would still be cursed, on my way to hell and under the wrath of Almighty God. Let Him be praised even if that were still so.

True Christianity is sacrificial in such a way that Jesus says we must deny ourselves of our own selfishness and pride, pick up our cross and follow Him,⁸ not half-heartedly, but in the totality and style of our public and private life. May God use this book to open your eyes to His glory, for His purposes and for the building of His bride, the Church. May Christ be formed in you.⁹

⁸ Luke 9:23

⁹ Galatians 4:19

*~ Verses to ponder with, pray
through and meditate upon ~*

*“The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and **much study is a weariness of the flesh.**”¹⁰*

So what are we to do?

*“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to **do justice**, and to **love kindness**, and to **walk humbly** with your God?”¹¹*

*“The end of the matter; all has been heard. **Fear God and keep his commandments**, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”¹²*

*“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore **whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same** will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of*

¹⁰ Ecclesiastes 12:11-12 – bold mine

¹¹ Micah 6:8 – bold mine

¹² Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 – bold mine

*the scribes and Pharisees, **you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.***¹³

*“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and **we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.** But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, **how does God’s love abide in him?** Little children, let us not love in word or talk **but in deed and in truth.**”¹⁴*

*“Remember those who are in prison, **as though in prison with them,** and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.”¹⁵*

In what ways are you loving and remembering the suffering, persecuted and lonely brothers and sisters in Christ?

How is your love put in action for the persecuted?

How does your righteousness go beyond that of the Pharisees in their rituals, laws and attendance?

Christianity is a dangerous title to claim!

¹³ Matthew 5:17-20 – bold mine

¹⁴ 1 John 3:16-18 – bold mine

¹⁵ Hebrews 13:3 – bold mine

~ Foreword ~

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”¹⁶

We live in a critical point in history. There are many different voices speaking and positioning themselves to grasp our time and attention. Never before have we experienced such an over abundance of competing viewpoints. But, who is right and who is wrong? In whom and/or in what can we place our trust, our faith and our energy? In God alone, and His Word! We should not just rely upon part of God’s Word, but rather all of it.

My friend Jeremy Strang has heard, seen and experienced the traumatic consequences of living ones life with only partial knowledge of and adherence to the truth. It is at best a very unsettling way to live. Throughout the world millions of people are perishing! People are experiencing thoughts of emptiness, frustration, hopelessness, and in some cases, false hope because they have affixed their faith to only half of the truth.

¹⁶ 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Many people have never heard, understood and believed in the whole gospel. We have listened, received and bought into only half of the truth. If this has happened to you, then you understand the harsh reality awaiting those who die in ignorance. In this book, Jeremy has been faithful to present the full truth of the gospel and the Word of God. It is only by hearing and believing in the whole truth that we are saved. Ask yourself, *"Have I heard and believed in the whole truth, or just a part of it?"* Peace, joy, comfort and hope await those who hear, receive and seek to live out the full truth of the gospel. So read on, and ask the Spirit to speak to your heart!

~ Pastor Steve Shullanberger ~

~ *Introduction* ~

*“Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors,
that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no
pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept
an offering from your hand.”¹⁷*

What man dares to stand up for the truth? Now I am not talking about standing up against abortion, although we should. I am not talking about standing up against the godless immorality of our culture, although we should. I am not talking about standing up against the mistreatment of the Scriptures by our crooked politicians, although we should. I am talking about standing up firm against our own selfish desires and the corruption within when we are by ourselves with no one looking. I am talking about standing against the sin to which you and I have *engrained* in us. I am talking about standing up in our homes, in our family leadership, in our manhood/womanhood and within the so called ‘*churches*’ of America. There is much talk of reformation,¹⁸ but who dares to stand up to themselves and to a blinded *Christian culture* as an American

¹⁷ Malachi 1:10

¹⁸ This is not yet widely known amongst contemporary ‘*christian*’ media.

indigenous missionary reaching out into the lost *churches*¹⁹ in our homeland?

Who is willing to repent, fight the good fight of faith, live in spiritual truth²⁰ and go out reaching the dying church members of America? This job will be dirty, nasty and down right vicious. The salvation of souls is on the line. When Christians in affluent America become swept into a move of the Holy Spirit, watch out, because then we will be able to send thousands upon thousands of indigenous missionaries out into the harvest lands of Africa, Asia, India and the entire 10/40 window²¹.

But why does this occur only *after* a move of the Holy Spirit? Until men in America truly repent and turn towards God, resources will be spent largely in vain. When men begin to see, with Spiritual and eternal eyes, only then will living and giving as a style of life be edifying unto the Lord. There is a cost to true revival in America – denial of self, the crucifying of the flesh, a deep sacrificial love for the souls of others and

¹⁹ Profession of faith means nothing if a transformed life in Jesus Christ is not evident – remaining in willful habitual sin is not a sign of a person being born again – for this very reason and to reduce further confusion, I will use a capital ‘C’ whenever I relate to the true Church of Jesus Christ and I will use a small ‘c’ whenever I relate to the so called church in America today. The same capitalization of the letter ‘C’ in regards to true Christianity verses ‘c’ for a false Christianity. This was taken from the author’s last book, *Urgency to Rise – a call to the American ‘church’* pg. 24 © 2008

²⁰ Romans 8:14; Ephesians 3:14-21

²¹ The 10/40 Window is an area of the world that contains the largest population of non-Christians in the world. The area extends from 10 degrees to 40 degrees North of the equator, and stretches from North Africa across to China. – this was taken from the www.1040window.org

emotional, possibly even physical persecution is only the beginning of carrying out such a movement. Most importantly, it has to be a work of the Holy Spirit or true revival will not occur.

The American indigenous missionary (this may be you) will face persecution – that is a promise.²² Are you willing to examine your claim of Christianity? Proclaiming that you are a Christian is *a dangerous title* and in America a very ignorant title it has become.

I have not arrived at some spiritual pinnacle nor attained some spiritual state greater than anyone else. But, I must say that I am a new creation in Christ Jesus and thus this world is not my home. I have not yet been glorified. I certainly have not yet resisted sin to the point of shedding my own blood.²³ This book was written for my own need to carefully examine my Christian claim, encourage professing Christians in affluent Western Christianity to grow in holiness, continue understanding biblical family leadership and to do whatever I can to possibly raise a few dollars and raise awareness for my suffering brothers and sisters in the other two-thirds of the world. It very well may be true that I need this book more than you do. That is ok as long as I heed God's Word, respond in personal application, repent where convicted and live by complete faith in obedience to the Spirit of God.

If the message of this book does not cause me to repent of my sin and lead me into further sanctification then it is all in vain. What will you do with the Scriptures that are presented within this book? Merely skim through them? All that I pray is that you

²² John 15:20 – more on this in chapter 3

²³ Hebrews 12:4

are open to hearing from the Lord and that you dig into the Scriptures for yourself. Find out for yourself if what I am saying is true, regardless of whether you like it or not. Cry out to God for the truth in what I am saying. If it is indeed true, then we all ought to be much more afraid, with a holy fear of God, and repent of our shallow, non-committed *American christian faith*.

I will strive to be holy as He is holy.²⁴ I will strive to be pure as He is pure.²⁵ I will strive to be diligent in supplementing my faith as I have been commanded.²⁶ And these three, holiness, purification and supplementation, have been commanded of you. A proper response is demanded of you this day as well. Are you still open?

Now I am aware of what it says in 1 Timothy 1:1-2 and in Leviticus 19:32 and I take these passages very seriously; so I approach you with great respect, love and admonition. But with that said, I now ask you, are you sure you want to read on? Scripture tells us that with whom much is given, much is required.²⁷ With much knowledge comes greater accountability on the final judgment day. If the popular *American christian culture* does not repent and turn to the only true, righteous, just and holy God of the Bible, man-centered, self-righteous knowledge will condemn many to hell.

Are you married? Are you a husband? A wife? Are you a father? A mother? Are you a leader within Christ's bride?²⁸ If so, know that greater responsibility,

²⁴ Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16

²⁵ James 4:8

²⁶ 2 Peter 1:3-10

²⁷ Luke 12:48

²⁸ The Church

greater accountability and a greater judgment is held just above your head. There is no escape plan other than the redemptive work of Christ upon the cross. His only plan involves a faithful Father lovingly disciplining His children through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, thereby leading to continual repentance and continual sanctification. Any other plan or way of escape is heresy and outside of God's will.

The written word of God demands faith. The spoken word of God demands faith. Jesus Christ, the very truth and essence of the Word of God, demands faith. For if we hold on to nothing more than a mental ascent of who Christ is, we are *not* wise. Wisdom is applied faith that takes knowledge and moves it into action through a style of life that is Christ honoring and biblically accountable. Faith takes knowledge into captivity and restrains it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In other words, wisdom is faith in the fullness of God, through obedience, and empowerment by the Holy Spirit. True knowledge starts with a holy fear of the Lord.²⁹

The problem is that most men, including many pastors, have no real spiritual understanding and experience of walking by the power of the Holy Spirit. Their 'Christianity' is nothing more than emotional experience and intellectual knowledge void of spiritual truth. But this can not be held to their works or their sincerity of heart, no it is much deeper – I dare say that many need to be *born again*,³⁰ or at the very least they have not totally surrendered and submitted themselves, by faith, into the hands of the living God. It would be

²⁹ Proverbs 1:7

³⁰ John 3:5-7

better for them to crucify their hearts, stop their works and cry out to God seeking His Holy Spirit and His eternal presence.

I submit to you that most men in the world of *popular christianity* have only given a mental ascent to the doctrines of Christ and have no spiritual understanding at all. Most men believe that spiritual understanding can be obtained by their own ability in acquiring knowledge through study, attending some school or by showing up to some *church* service once a week. God can use these things as a means to lead a person to a true filling and application of His Spirit, but God cannot and will not be boxed in by man's ways, methods or thoughts. It is the person who denies himself³¹ the things of this darkened world, risking self-esteem, status and even bodily harm, who seems to be most sensitive to hearing from the Holy Spirit, and demonstrating the most joy.

Now I am not at all saying that this comes through works or human effort, for this could never be. Rather, I am talking about a man who is completely open to the Spirit of God in his life and *not in a way that meets his selfish desires for personal gain*. A man who is truly humble and contrite of heart – to such a man does God abide, not by man's strength, but by the strength and person of Christ Himself³² through the Spirit. This is not to remain in the intellectual knowledge of God nor remain in the intellectual preaching of the cross using worldly human methods. No not at all! Most of the time our intellect closes us off to hearing from the Holy Spirit, this is why we are

³¹ Matthew 10:38; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23, 14:27

³² Isaiah 66:2, 57:15; Psalm 34:18

called to renew our minds.³³ Do not limit God to your feeble human understanding.

Now you may be asking, “*What is the point to all of this anyway?*” Simply this, a man who is void of the Holy Spirit in his so called, *christian life*, will show himself to be a hypocrite to his wife, his children and to those outside the Church. Or worse, he may even be liked as a ‘good’ person by carnal men. Without the power of the Holy Spirit bringing about a new birth, true biblical manhood will not be found and the results will be catastrophic. The eyes of such a man’s child will be blinded to the truth.³⁴ Those who are outside the Church will see no reason to go to some building once a week. When the profession of his faith contradicts the style of his life, a lie is lived, sin is spread and destruction is left in the wake. Taking the name of Jesus Christ is *no game*. We have been given a great privilege and responsibility to carry the Son’s name in total truth. Our lack of commitment to carry out God’s will has the power to blind others to the truth, deceive ourselves of true salvation and damn our children to hell.

A great majority of men in the so-called church today are in these very shoes, because they do not know the power of God in their lives. They continue to go to some *church* at times making a verbal profession of half-truths they have learned from some ear-tickling smooth talker. They actually blaspheme the very gospel that they claim – a gospel they know very little about. And if they are ever challenged in regards to the authenticity of their faith, they reject the person

³³ Romans 12:2

³⁴ Hosea 4:6d

who dares to question their salvation; they twist what little Scriptures they do know, claiming that they are being judged as they attempt to justify their sin-filled godless lifestyle.³⁵ These men have an idea of Christianity that is nothing more than half-truths and emotional experiences with no Scriptural basis for what they believe. These men falsely imagine that there is gain in godliness.³⁶ And here is the thing, these men could never teach and lead their children in a Christ honoring way, love and lead their wife as Christ does the Church, be of any real asset to the building of the true Church nor be of any opposition to the prince of this world.³⁷ Why? They do not have the truth in them.³⁸ Repentance is a spiritual word found only in a dictionary to these people and not a desire of their heart. Repentance is only seen as something for others and not themselves. Hypocrite is their title and one rightly given.

Will you stand against your self-centeredness this day? Will you heed the Word of God? Will you test yourself in relation to the Scriptures? Will you actually apply the Scriptures to yourself?³⁹ Affirmation will result in application rather than mere words from your mouth or thoughts in your mind. Application will result in action. Action must be empowered and led by the Holy Spirit. Are you still open to the Lord of glory?

³⁵ Thought owed to Brother Paul Washer – HeartCry Missionary Society

³⁶ 1 Timothy 6:5b

³⁷ Ephesians 2:2

³⁸ 1 John 2:4

³⁹ Proverbs 23:12

Today, the true and full Gospel is rarely preached and hardly known. Men walk around blindly carrying their cup of wrath⁴⁰ and sipping on it as if it were the latest cultural trend – in the American *church* this has proven itself true. Most professing Christians are ignorant that God even has a cup of wrath. They are ignorant of the fact that Jesus has taken our sin upon Himself, actually bearing our curse and taking our wrath that was due to be paid by each one of us. His payment for sin is offered freely to all and without charge. But know that it is not given to everyone. Hell is a reality that many professing believers are heading towards. It is just a matter of time; although God is long suffering and desiring that no one will perish.⁴¹

The most severe wrath will fall on those who hypocritically take the name of Christian, blaspheme the Holy Spirit and live in direct opposition to God's commandments.⁴² This should cause us all to have a holy fear of God,⁴³ drive us to examine ourselves and give us a clear diagnosis if we are really in the faith.⁴⁴

May the Lord of grace and truth grant us repentance. May the Spirit cause us to fulfill the great commission by sending missionaries, who are sold out for Christ, to the ends of the world. May we become missionaries to the people of our communities and *churches* where we live. Amen.

⁴⁰ John 3:36

⁴¹ 1Timothy 2:4

⁴² Matthew 7:21-23; Revelation 3:15-17

⁴³ This is not a spirit of fear

⁴⁴ 2 Corinthians 13:5, Lamentations 3:40

*“The Gospel without Godly sorrow, penitence and repentance is
no Gospel, but a worldly gospel of men.”*
Terrance D. Light⁴⁵

*“Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and
said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer
and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and
forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all
nations, beginning from Jerusalem.’”⁴⁶*

⁴⁵ Good friend, mentor and brother in Christ

⁴⁶ Luke 24:45-47

Chapter 1

~ What you don't know is lethal ~

*"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children."
~ Hosea 4:6 ~*

What a frightful verse. Now don't pin this on the Levitical priests alone. This verse applies to us here today who call ourselves Christians. True Christians are to be the priests today.⁴⁷ Look at the verse again. Do you see the great warning to professing Christians?⁴⁸ Look at the state of our country in regards to sin, the economy and the overall misuse of the material blessings that we have been given. Look how much *stuff* we have and how tightly our fist is around every bit of it. To give our money or our stuff to another is almost a *crime* to most people. What is worse yet is that we take a verse like the one above, apply it outwardly to the Levitical priests, but not to ourselves.⁴⁹ Our *popular professing christian culture*, as a whole, fits this verse – rejection of God's knowledge – rejection of a holy fear of the Lord.

One of the very great dangers that you and I can fall into when reading the bible or listening to a message is that we forget to apply the word of God, whether written or spoken, to ourselves first and

⁴⁷ Revelation 1:5-6

⁴⁸ More on this in the next chapter

⁴⁹ While this is talking about the priests in Israel, we must never forget to apply the whole council of God to ourselves.

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foremost. We are to examine ourselves,⁵⁰ repent of our wickedness⁵¹ and pull the *forest* of logs out of our own eyes.⁵² And this is only possible by the grace, mercy, loving discipline of Almighty God⁵³ and the powerful conviction of the Holy Spirit⁵⁴

Believe it or not, what you don't know, not only will kill you, but may already be confirming your condemnation to hell right now. I know that these are strong words, but friend, Christianity is no mere game. In chapter three we will look at the eternal consequences of taking such a title lightly.

Let me take a minute to unpack a story for you. It is a story of love, of compassion, of good works, of dedication. Or is it? It is a story of *popular American christianity* today. I pray that the Spirit of God opens your eyes to the truth within this story.

“For just a moment I want to specifically talk to the men. Ladies, stay with me because you can just rearrange the characters around – you will understand.

Now imagine that you and I are the best of friends and we go to the same church. We have a great friendship, we serve and do good works together and we are dedicated to showing up on Sunday to church. We are both professing Christians.

Now let's say that your wife is stranded along side the road and I see her needing help. I stop and find out that she has a flat tire and I attempt to fix the tire but I do not have the

⁵⁰ 2 Corinthians 13:5

⁵¹ Luke 13:3

⁵² Matthew 7:3-5

⁵³ Hebrews 12:5-11

⁵⁴ John 16:8, 13; 1 Thessalonians 1:5

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proper tools. The only thing I can think of to do at this point is to drive her home where you are waiting for her to arrive. Once we arrive, I tell you the details of where I saw your wife and what's wrong with her car. She gets home safe and you are thankful. I go on my way. I showed my love, my concern, my passion to help and my good works.

But what if my visible love, passion, helpfulness and good works were not the full truth? What if I did not tell you one small detail? After all, because of my love for you and for your friendship, I did not want to tell you one small piece of this story. What if the detail I left out was so significant to the truth of this situation it would radically change the outcome? After all, we are friends and friends never want to offend each other – right? Would you want to know all the details?

What I did not tell you was that on my way to drop off your wife we stopped by a hotel and I took full sexual advantage of her. I fulfilled every vile lust filled act that I could think of. Now how do you feel about my generosity? My love? My good works? My passion? Would this change how you feel about me? Do the things you do not know hurt you? Absolutely!

You see I have demonstrated exactly what most professing Christians and professing 'churches' believe to be ministry. I have done good works; I have shown mercy; I have demonstrated love; and I have professed to you the truth of your wife's situation. And I have told you just enough truth to still be friends with you.

Herein is my point. Today we are somewhat told that Jesus was born of a virgin. We are told that Jesus lived a sinless life – if you can believe that the Scriptures are more than just stories. We are half-heartedly told that Jesus was crucified upon a cross,

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died and was raised on the third day. We are told that Jesus ascended into Heaven – that is if you believe that He is really alive. We are told He has removed everyone's sins as far as the east is from the west.⁵⁵

But all of this is only *half the truth*. This is not the full Gospel. Most professing churches and *professing christians* in America only know half the truth because they are only being told half-truths. Because they are only told half-truths most people see everyone as ok, therefore they neglect studying the weightier aspects of the Gospel. After all, why study if you know it all? American *churches*, and pastors at large, are making the Gospel of Jesus Christ less offensive so to appease the carnality of their 'flock' who can live their best life now under a blanket of self-preservation and pride filled indulgence. But it is far worse than this.

Many people preach in the way of *sheol*.⁵⁶ This can only be because they are of *sheol*. Unregenerate hearts have no ability to preach with a longing for their hearers to be saved. It is impossible to earnestly hope for something for someone else when you yourself have no idea what it is you are hoping for.

You see the part that is not being told to the majority of professing Western believers is this – if you are not born again you will not see the kingdom of Heaven⁵⁷ nor will you enter the kingdom of Heaven.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Psalm 103:12

⁵⁶ Hebrew word of uncertain etymology, synonym of "bor" (pit), "abaddon" and "shaqat" (pit or destruction), and perhaps also of "tehom" (abyss). It connotes the place where those that had died were believed to be congregated. www.JewishEncyclopedia.com

⁵⁷ John 3:3

⁵⁸ John 3:5

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As a matter of fact Jesus says, *“Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”*⁵⁹ Don’t isolate John 3:16, abuse John 3:36a, misread Romans 10:9-10 and hide behind Ephesians 2:8. When the Son of God, Jesus Christ the Lord, was nailed to the tree He became a curse⁶⁰ and bore our sin.⁶¹ Almighty God willfully crushed His only Son⁶² with a holy hatred and almighty wrath towards sin. Jesus carried our sin and was crushed to death by His own Father. We are all born into iniquity through sin.⁶³ The bible says that He has removed the sins of *those who fear Him*, as far as the east is from the west.⁶⁴ *“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”*⁶⁵ This belief is from the heart.⁶⁶ This is a belief that affects the very essence and motive of every willful act of the one who professes such belief. The very worst thing that is not being told today, at least in my eyes is this: every word of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is true and sufficient without your mental ascent. All this is what we are not being told.

Your heart and my heart is completely depraved and desperately wicked⁶⁷ before a holy God. Our innermost being is at enmity with God. There is

⁵⁹ John 3:36b

⁶⁰ Galatians 3:13

⁶¹ 1 Peter 2:24

⁶² Isaiah 53:10

⁶³ Psalm 51:5

⁶⁴ Psalm 103:11, 13, and 17 – don’t neglect ANY of the Scriptures

⁶⁵ John 3:18

⁶⁶ Romans 10:10a

⁶⁷ Jeremiah 17:9

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no one who does good⁶⁸ and all have sinned.⁶⁹ As a matter of fact our good works, even our best ones, are nothing but a menstrual rag before God.⁷⁰ We can do nothing worthy to earn our salvation.

Do you know these things in the depth of your soul? If so, do you tremble before His word?⁷¹ Do you seek to know Him more? Do you desire to spend more time with Him? Do you seek to love the things that He loves and hate the things that He hates? Once again, these things we are not asked, nor are we told. We are certainly not encouraged to tarry with these things in mind.

Jesus never promises that the Christian life is going to be everything that you want it to be. Actually He promises just the opposite. He promises persecution.⁷² Paul said everyone desiring *“to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”*⁷³ Jesus says we are to proclaim His resurrection, repentance of our sins and forgiveness in His name to all people.⁷⁴ Remember John 3:36b, Jesus says, *“...whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”* Now do not get legalistic. Jesus never said that you will be perfect and sinless, but rather you are to seek first the kingdom,⁷⁵ repent,⁷⁶ believe,⁷⁷ deny yourself and follow

⁶⁸ Romans 3:12

⁶⁹ Romans 3:23

⁷⁰ Isaiah 64:6a

⁷¹ Thought owed to Brother Paul Washer

⁷² John 15:17-19

⁷³ 2 Timothy 3:12

⁷⁴ Luke 24:27

⁷⁵ Matthew 6:33

⁷⁶ Matthew 4:17; Mark 6:12

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Him.⁷⁸ Jesus also said that many who profess my name will be cast into hell.⁷⁹ Where is the promise that your best life is here and in the flesh?

We are called to examine ourselves⁸⁰ and see if the truth is in us. Remember His commandments are not burdensome to a true believer,⁸¹ rather they are a joy. A true born again follower of the Lord Jesus Christ continually desires to know Him, to worship Him, to love Him, to love the things He loves, to hate the things He hates, desires to spend more time with Him in prayer and in His Word. True born again believers have become a new creation⁸² in Christ Jesus, not just through definition, but their very character is radically changed. The old has gone and the new has come. Is this a reality in your life today? If not, seek Him hard and seek Him earnestly. He knows your thoughts,⁸³ intentions and the desires of your heart.⁸⁴ You can't fool Him.

“Unless Christ gives the interpretation, there will be no knowledge, or wisdom or truth among men.”⁸⁵

⁷⁷ Mark 1:15

⁷⁸ Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23

⁷⁹ Matthew 7:21-23

⁸⁰ 2 Corinthians 13:5

⁸¹ 1 John 5:3

⁸² 2 Corinthians 5:17

⁸³ Psalm 94:11

⁸⁴ Hebrews 4:12

⁸⁵ Paul Washer – *Taking the Message to the World* – Feb. 21st 2009 – True Church Conference Muscle Shoals, AL

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*“But the one who says that he is without sin”*⁸⁶
deceives himself and the truth is not in him. If you profess to have fellowship with Him (or, in other words, make a verbal profession of faith) and you walk in darkness (meaning as a willful style of life), you are a liar.⁸⁷ How do you know if your style of life is one of darkness – simple, what does the Scriptures have to say?⁸⁸ Ask yourself this: What most consumes my thoughts? Therein lies your style of life and very possibly your god as well.⁸⁹

Again, please understand that I am not talking about sinless perfection, but rather I am talking about an overall style of life that proves regeneration (initial salvation) has taken place and an ongoing process of sanctification (a process of becoming more like Jesus). These two go hand in hand. If you are not becoming like Christ today, then you have no assurance that you have ever been born again. You may be saying that you cannot judge a book by its cover, but this is not true. Jesus said you can judge a tree by its fruit.⁹⁰

At the beginning of this chapter I said that we must be careful not to fall into the trap of focusing the Scriptures only outward and away from ourselves. Before I finish up this chapter I want to talk to you briefly about three things not often discussed in our churches these days and direct our attention inward. What we don’t know about these things is lethal to our

⁸⁶ 1 John 1:8

⁸⁷ 1 John 1:6

⁸⁸ More on this in upcoming chapters

⁸⁹ Thought owed to Paul Washer

⁹⁰ Matthew 7:15-20

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true spiritual worship of God.⁹¹ Let us ponder these three: titles, self-denial and goats.

~ Titles ~

Before we begin this section, let us remember that I am talking to *professing christians* here. We need to understand the aim in order to effectively understand the message. And more than this, we must have the Holy Spirit in order to truly understand anything of eternal importance.

Almost every day I see people take upon themselves every title known to man – Republican, Democrat, Doctor, Lawyer, Catholic, Protestant, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, non-denominational, charismatic, Calvinist, Arminian, Jehovah Witness, Mormon, this church and that church. Men show more enthusiasm and pride for human titles, groups they belong to, degrees they hold, job titles and good works proving their sincerity of heart, more than demonstrating enthusiasm for Christ. Pride for man-made titles reigns, while reluctant caution for the word of Christ is displayed.

“This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builder, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”⁹²

⁹¹ John 4:23-24; Romans 12:1

⁹² Acts 4:11-12

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We should be ashamed to take the name of Christ so lightly so as to disgrace the greatest and most exalted name⁹³ by placing a human title to our lives. *“We must pay much closer attention”* to the word of God and the true Gospel.⁹⁴ *“How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?”*⁹⁵

*“You who make light of sin, go to Christ and ask Him how heavy it was, that which pressed Him to the ground, and that which you make light of. The least sin would have pressed you and all the pillars of heaven to the bottom of hell forever.”*⁹⁶

If you are a Christian, then boldly live out, in its entirety, the truth. If you are not a devoted follower of Christ and believer in the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture, then just stop professing that you are a *Christian*, when in all actuality you have been holding on to some dead religious system of good works by crossing the doors of a supposed *church* once a week. If you are a true believer then you need no other title than just – Christian. Claiming any title or exalting religious preferences above the *greatest name* is not good. Hear me clearly, no title is needed and no man centered acclamation will do, rather seek to know Christ and labor to live in Him. Put to death the deeds of the body⁹⁷ – this is true life.

⁹³ Philippians 2:9

⁹⁴ Hebrews 2:1

⁹⁵ Hebrews 2:3

⁹⁶ *The Puritans of Conversion – Sin: The Greatest Evil* – Samuel Bolton – pg 39 ISBN 1-877611-11-5

⁹⁷ Colossians 3:5-6; Romans 8:12-13

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‘For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers what I mean is that each of you says, ‘I follow Paul,’ or ‘I follow Apollos,’ or ‘I follow Cephas,’ or ‘I follow Christ.’ Is Christ divided?’⁹⁸

We don’t have men following men these days, do we? We don’t have quarreling over denominational differences, do we? We don’t argue extra biblical garbage, do we? Most certainly we do! Meanwhile people around the world starve and we strife. Missionaries out in the cold rely upon faith in God to provide food, shelter and protection and yet we faithlessly complain about our burgers taking 5 minutes to be bagged and our cable TV service does not offer the package that we want. Christians around the world are under severe persecution⁹⁹ and we sit blindly on our plush cushion of comfort with our feet dangling in complacency and our egos in the air.

I am just as likely to fall prey to the false American way of life as anyone. It would be very easy for me to exalt and greatly esteem men like K.P. Yohannan, Paul Washer, Jeff Noblit, David Miller, Voddie Baucham, John Piper, John MacArthur and the list goes on. God has used these men greatly in my life, but I will not give them, nor any other man, the praise and glory that is rightly due only to my Lord and Savior. No man will steal the joy of my salvation in Christ Jesus.

Having said this, there is one man I must watch and thoroughly discern more than any other. This man

⁹⁸ 1 Corinthians 1:12-13

⁹⁹ Check out: www.persecution.com and www.gfa.org for starters.

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tries to establish idol status more than most. That man is me. I have to be so alert to my prideful, self-centered and conceited exaltation of my *sin-self*. It is good for me to examine myself very closely and very diligently under the mighty hand of the Lord's word. I need to be in His presence and sustained by Him or I will fall. As much as my flesh hates the conviction of the Holy Spirit, I know that His conviction is the best medicine for treating my corrupt flesh. His medicine not only benefits me, but it also benefits those with whom I come into contact. People need more of Christ's love and truth, not my extra biblical opinions.

Everything you do is to be bathed in the totality of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Claiming to walk with Christ and then leaving Him out of your workplace, your daily activities, your private life, and yes, even the voting booths, points towards a severe lack in faith and maybe even the reality that you are not regenerate at all. I do not say this to anger you, but rather to save you by speaking the simple truth. The truth sometimes hurts because it points out our fallen state and short comings in comparison to a perfect and holy God.

So then make your ear attentive¹⁰⁰ to the entire council of God's word and examine yourself. After examining yourself and coming to grips with the truth about yourself,¹⁰¹ preach the word of God with your lifestyle, your commitment¹⁰² and your mouth. Preach not your opinions or your titles but only the gospel of truth in its entirety. Don't expect the gospel to bring

¹⁰⁰ Proverbs 2:1-2, 4:1

¹⁰¹ Which is an ongoing process

¹⁰² Thought owed to Brother K.P. Yohannan

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you your best life now, because this is not promised to you. The gospel is sharp,¹⁰³ dangerous and foolish to those who are perishing.¹⁰⁴ Don't expect to be liked when preaching the truth. Persecution is not the goal, but rather love should be the fuel driving our desires – love for God and love for all peoples.

The greatest is love.¹⁰⁵ Love and truth walk hand in hand; they never contradict one another. True love always focuses on the truth – Christ is the only title that we ought to regard as supreme. If we are going to serve a title, let us serve Him through practicing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly in His presence.¹⁰⁶

~ Death of Self ~

Exalting man made titles is just one of the hundreds and even thousands of ways we must die to our self-centeredness. We must deny ourselves in order to walk in the love and truth of Jesus Christ. To walk in love and truth we must recognize sin for what it is and recognize our part in it. We must put to death every bit of sinful living that our flesh revels in. We must deny ourselves¹⁰⁷ and die to our old nature.¹⁰⁸

Grace is not merely some feel good term used as an excuse to justify sinful living. No, grace is that

¹⁰³ Hebrews 4:12

¹⁰⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:18

¹⁰⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:13

¹⁰⁶ Micah 6:8

¹⁰⁷ Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23

¹⁰⁸ Romans 8:13

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which leads us into a right relationship with the Father, actually giving us the ability to die to ourselves through the supernatural work of Jesus Christ on the cross and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ, our propitiation, is our grace and without His atoning work of salvation we could have never had a chance to become born again and kill off the old sin nature.

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own passion who are zealous for good works.”¹⁰⁹

Far too often I find those who fail at dying to themselves, myself included, may have good motives and intentions, but apart from the Holy Spirit, motives and intentions alone will never bring us one step closer to the likeness of Christ. Our own self-will and good ideology always fall short of the goal. Why? Self-will, ideologies, intentions and motives that are driven by any other means apart from Christ, are all rooted in the flesh.

If you are a true child of God who has been born again, then you have already been given the power to overcome the bondage of sinful living and the ability to crucify your flesh – this of course is only in and through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and empowering of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁰⁹ Titus2:11-14

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Our desire ought to be in Him, for Him and with Him. He must be at the very center of all our desires otherwise we are in great danger of false idolatrous worship, which most often is ourselves. We will end up relying upon good intentions, morality and our blind understanding of truth. Ultimately it means we will remain in bondage to sin and apart from Christ. To die to self means just that – kill off, throw off, lay aside everything that you esteem as good in your own sight. In comparison to God nothing is good!

“Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.”¹¹⁰

What is it to kill off or lay aside something? It is to no longer value anything or anyone greater than the Lord Jesus Christ. Why is it so important to crucify the flesh? The flesh is against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh.¹¹¹ You see to even set your mind on the things of the flesh is death.¹¹²

“For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Hebrews 12:1b-2a

¹¹¹ Galatians 5:17

¹¹² Romans 8:5-6 – more on this in upcoming chapters

¹¹³ Romans 8:7-8

~ Goats ~

It is so important that we engage with the Spirit in warfare against our flesh. We must not let sin have any control in our life. It does not matter what title you claim and what half-truth you hold onto. God knows your thoughts¹¹⁴ and sees your heart.¹¹⁵ If we do not take *bold* of, and crucify, our human exaltation and begin to die to ourselves, we are at great danger of actually being a goat. People who seek the constant pleasures of the flesh, no matter what they may be, and especially in the privacy of their own mind, are the goats.

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory; and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a Shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.”¹¹⁶

In the American *church* today¹¹⁷ we have only two groups of people. There are many well fed goats destined for eternal hell and a few starving sheep crying out for the presence of Almighty God. In the same way there are only two religions, one of works and one of grace. Both people and religion are the same; they are either a lie or the truth; of Satan or of the Christ. There is no other way, and no third path to follow.

¹¹⁴ Psalm 94:11

¹¹⁵ 1 Samuel 16:7; Jeremiah 20:12

¹¹⁶ Matthew 25:31-33

¹¹⁷ Not just the American *church* but all *churches* in the world

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The sheep are the true Church. The goats are blind self-feeders who devour everything in their path for their own consumption. The most damned goats are the ones who take the privileged title of Christ with no experience of the new birth, lack the power of the Holy Spirit, justify their carnal lifestyle, prefer complacent and comfortable *christianity* and lack true spiritual understanding. Goats do things their own way regardless of what the Bible says. They do not seek deeper understanding of who God really is; yea they even despise God and hate their fellow church members when things do not go well in their lives.

Goats watch things, read things and think things that sheep cannot do without coming under conviction. Sheep love the things of God, desire the things of God and worship God for who He is, regardless of their physical, emotional and economic state. Goats love what makes them feel good, have no real desire for holiness and “have only a form of godliness.”¹¹⁸

Goats are entertained by men on stage. Goats do not question the men on stage or compare their teachings to the Scriptures. Goats forget they even own a Bible during the work week. Entertainment and ear-tickling communicators are in demand and if they are not given what their carnal flesh desires, they leave their *church* in search of better music, better lifestyles, better environments and no conviction messages. They may even seek to have the pastor removed or split the *church*.

¹¹⁸ 2 Timothy 3:5

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Sheep gather to praise God for who He is, to listen with intent to the words spoken from the mouth of the pastor, to discern what was spoken and to take all thoughts captive. Sheep are diligent to supplement their faith.¹¹⁹ Sheep know that they are helpless and in need of a shepherd; while goats believe themselves secure because of their *Sunday attentiveness* and their so called *good works*. Sheep have experienced the power of salvation and the joy of Christ Jesus. The sheep know the Savior's voice and they follow Him.¹²⁰

Make no mistake, the Scriptures never leave anyone lukewarm, nor do they give room for the justification of a sinful lifestyle. God's Word divides and labels each accordingly – you are either a sheep or a goat. The question for you and me to ponder is which one are we? If we believe ourselves to be a sheep then what biblical evidence do we have that supports our claim? This need not necessarily be answered to man, although your lifestyle and verbal communication should be evident, but rather this needs to be answered in the depths of who you are. You and I need to be real honest with God and then be obedient to the Holy Spirit as directed.

The Word of God penetrates to the core. It divides the thoughts and the intentions of the heart.¹²¹ Nothing is hidden from God's sight – nothing!¹²²

¹¹⁹ 2 Peter 1:5

¹²⁰ John 10:4

¹²¹ Hebrews 4:12

¹²² Hebrews 4:13

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“For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole council of God.”¹²³

Looking back to the opening story in this chapter, we can see that leaving out one detail, whether purposely or accidentally, can be very hurtful and very damning to a human soul. The apostle Paul did not shrink from declaring the whole council of God and neither should we. We need to declare the Gospel with love and boldness, all the while in complete submission to the Spirit and with humility towards our fellow man. If we are truly born again, let us continually be renewed by the things of Christ¹²⁴ and live out our Christian life boldly saturated with Christ’s love. You see, one of the most deceptive, dangerous and blinding ways that Satan performs his sin filled atrocities is by dressing up men in sheep’s clothing and painting them as messengers of light.¹²⁵ What you don’t know is lethal.

¹²³ Acts 20:27 – bold mine

¹²⁴ Romans 12:1-3

¹²⁵ 2 Corinthians 11:14

“The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God. For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever. Arise, O LORD! Let not man prevail; let the nations be judged before you! Put them in fear, O LORD! Let the nations know that they are but men!”¹²⁶

“Beware of getting man as your friend by purchasing God to be your enemy.”¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Psalm 9:17-20

¹²⁷ *The Puritans on Conversion*, pg 17 – Samuel Bolton

Chapter 2

~ Not by your might ~

“Then he said to me, ‘This is the Word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.’”
~Zechariah 4:6~

There is absolutely nothing you and I can do to earn salvation and a right standing with God.¹²⁸ Nothing we say, think or do will ever bring us even one step closer to the King of Glory. Anything that we do out of obedience, and to the glory of God, is only because the Spirit spoke it, enabled our ears to hear, placed the desire in us to move and empowered our bodies to carry out His will. So where is our boasting? *“Let him who boasts, boast in knowing the Lord.”¹²⁹* Our boasting ought to be completely in the risen Savior.

Jesus Christ has become the only means of our propitiation.¹³⁰ Jesus was the perfect blood sacrifice who paid the high priced demand for the just satisfaction of God’s holy wrath towards sin. His blood was a richer payment for sin than the totality of good morals, good works and all the encompassing blood of mankind, past, present and future combined. He was, still is and will be forever, the spotless Lamb of God.

He was holy before He was conceived; we are corrupt and laced with sin since birth. Even if we

¹²⁸ Psalm 37:39; Ephesians 2:8-10; Galatians 2:16, 3:10

¹²⁹ Jeremiah 9:24; 1 Corinthians 1:31; 2 Corinthians 10:17

¹³⁰ Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2, 4:10

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never committed even the least sin, we still would be denied heaven because of our offensive odor of decaying sin that permeates our very nature. So who are we to boast in man-centered ways and traditions?

Sin is completely saturating our inner man. To deny we have sin and deny that our very *spiritual DNA* is corrupt would be to call God a liar, deceive ourselves and provide clear evidence that the truth of Jesus Christ is not in us.¹³¹ So what then are we left to do if sin is so engrained in our nature? Well, we must first come to *grips* with the fact that what the Bible says about who we are is true. I am not good; you are not good; no one is good.¹³² We must also come to accept the fact that if we fail at even one point in God's law, we are guilty, having broken the whole law.¹³³ Our most righteous deeds are nothing more than soiled menstrual rags to God.¹³⁴

“The absence of all other goods, the presence of all created evils, will not make you hateful to God if sin is not there; so the presence of all other goods and the absence of all other evils will not render you lovely if sin is there.”¹³⁵

We must come to understand that without a supernatural work, a regenerating work of the Holy Spirit bringing about a new and true birth, we are already condemned and destined to hell. The original

¹³¹ 1 John 1:8, 10

¹³² Romans 3:9-12, 23

¹³³ James 2:10

¹³⁴ Isaiah 64:6 – as mentioned in the last chapter

¹³⁵ Samuel Bolton – *The Puritans of Conversion* – pg. 95

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sin of Adam, by which we inherited our sin stained soul, cost us the same price as it did Adam – separation from God.¹³⁶ We have to understand that we are already condemned¹³⁷ and the wrath of God has not been lifted.¹³⁸ Making a claim of faith, relying upon idols, works or religion and even your personal beliefs will not and cannot save you. No matter how hard you try, you cannot make yourself pleasing to God.

Sin has severed fellowship with God. Adam's first response was to hide his face from God.¹³⁹ Adam's second response was just as bad as he shunned the chance to repent and shifted the blame to Eve and God.¹⁴⁰ Adam complacently denied what God had warned him not to do. He watched the sin become reality and did not properly love and lead Eve. Adam must have liked what he was seeing take place. Do you see any patterns here, especially for us men?

Many men today, just as Adam, have chosen to follow the *father* and *prince* of this present age.¹⁴¹ Satan has deceived the whole world¹⁴² and, through his cunning,¹⁴³ he has twisted God's Word in order to deceive Adam and Eve into eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; whereby sin, having been

¹³⁶ Genesis 3:22-24

¹³⁷ John 3:18

¹³⁸ John 3:36 - that is apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, and this through Christ's redemptive atonement.

¹³⁹ Genesis 3:8

¹⁴⁰ Genesis 3:8-13

¹⁴¹ John 8:44; Ephesians 2:1-3

¹⁴² Revelation 12:9

¹⁴³ Genesis 3:1 - craftiness

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a product of Satan's rebellion, entered mortal man and communion with God ceased.

Satan is the originator of sin and declares ongoing war against God. Bolton says, *"That which fights against and opposes the greatest good must be the greatest evil, but sin opposes and fights against the greatest good. Hence a church father called sin 'God-slaughter,' that which strikes against the being and essence of God, that which, were it strong enough, were it infinitely evil as God is the highest good, would labor to 'un-be' God."*¹⁴⁴ This is the sin which David talks of having been brought forth in since his very conception;¹⁴⁵ and this is the very same sin that lurks hidden within you and me.

We have the very same potential to be just as insane as Adolph Hitler, Saddam Hussein and every serial killer, crazed rapist and sick child predator there has ever been. This is a fact for myself and every human on the planet. We have to understand that we are just as wicked to God as everyone else. We have to understand that if it were not for Almighty God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, no one would be spared from hell – no one! We must understand that not only are the *grossly* sinful and obviously deviant damned, but so also are the truth twisting, eye blinding men who deceive by their crafty words of eloquent and ear-tickling speeches – those who twist the Scripture just enough to leave a small portion of truth, only to fulfill their perverted deep desires. By the way, voting for a partial biblical president would also fall in this arena.

¹⁴⁴ Samuel Bolton – *Puritans on Conversion* – pg. 6

¹⁴⁵ Psalm 51:5

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In 1 Corinthians 6:18, Paul says, “*Flee from sexual immorality.*” James says, “*Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*”¹⁴⁶ Interesting... the sin which is against our body¹⁴⁷ we are told to flee from, yet we are told to resist the devil and even to prepare ourselves for spiritual battle.¹⁴⁸

Where am I going with this? This should serve as a warning to us. Sin is so vile, so wicked and so much at enmity with God that it is actually more destructive and more powerful than the very one who caused it and uses it – Satan.

Who knew that the consequences of eating of the tree, in direct disobedience to God, would carry such a loathsome, vile, disgusting and highly contagious disease. You and I are this disease; carry this disease and spread this disease. We are scarred with the losing battle wounds of spiritual warfare – a warfare bent on destroying God, establishing our own kingdoms and fulfilling every pride filled desire, no matter who we may hurt in the process. But praise God that there is a way of escape¹⁴⁹ from the condemnation of sin. We need a Savior who is real, true and in control. We do not need our works or religious beliefs, for they will never do a true work of redemption, a true blood payment for sin they can never be!

¹⁴⁶ James 4:7

¹⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

¹⁴⁸ Ephesians 6:10-20 – more on this in chapter four

¹⁴⁹ John 15:6; 1 Corinthians 10:13

~ A bit personal ~

For a moment, let's get really personal and address the men in the audience. Men, are you loving your wives as Christ loves the Church?¹⁵⁰ Are you striving to be a servant to your wife and lovingly lead her according to the example Christ has displayed? Are you showing her honor?¹⁵¹ Are you striving to understand biblical fatherhood for the sake of your children?

Many men have claimed that they would physically die for their families if the need were to arise – so what! The reality is that there is a need for this now. Are you willing to die to yourself, to your desires, wants, plans and comforts today? Right now? If you are not willing to further investigate what I am saying and you are not willing to give all up for your family, then what good is your dead body if it may be heading to hell? How does your physical death help anyone in your family if you are not dying to yourself now and striving to exemplify and teach them about Christ?

If you are not serving, loving and leading your wife biblically, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you are outside of the will of God. Fathers, know this, you may be the greatest reason that your children will remain under a curse¹⁵² and be destined for hell. Your children see your lifestyle and the verbal words that you claim, and by a very young age, they have you figured out. If your children knew the meaning of the word,

¹⁵⁰ Ephesians 5:25

¹⁵¹ 1 Peter 3:7

¹⁵² Exodus 34:7

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they would label you, *hypocrite*. For the greatest majority of men in America this is true. This is the reason for the degraded home life, our downward cultural trends and sexual immorality. It starts with the father. Father, have you been regenerated? What's your evidence of proof?

Overall, dads are biblically lacking and engrossed in sin. Dads have allowed the pagan and false teachings about Santa Clause, the Easter Bunny, the tooth fairy, superman, batman, princes and fairy tales (just to name a few) to infiltrate the fake fantasy life of the child's mind. Do you expect your children to believe in your *god*, and that this *god* is true? Why would they believe? Your children have been lied to since birth so what makes your *god* real? Where was the daily living in the Spirit, daily real-life application and biblical stories about the Christ in their young upbringing? Where are these things today? Father, it is your job to teach these things to your children, not the job of a Sunday school or some program. It is certainly not the job of a youth pastor who has never raised children himself. Most importantly it begins by living in the truth as your style of life!

I would submit to you that a great majority of Americans professing to be Christians bypass this understanding and hold *weak-armed* onto only a part of the Scriptures and hold tightly to man-made fables. Most people hold onto a decision they made, a class they took, a program they graduated from or a religious ritual they were a part of, thereby making a verbal profession of a title they know very little about. Where is the experience of the new birth? The empowerment

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of the Spirit? Or the willingness to risk everything for the name of Christ and the spreading of the gospel?

Many people say that they believe and they are therefore not condemned.¹⁵³ Many profess with their mouth and believe a delusional *jesus* type picture of who they think *god* is, thus believing themselves saved.¹⁵⁴ Many believe in a “*sisified christ*,” as Voddie Baucham has said.¹⁵⁵ Many claim grace and faith and believe themselves saved.¹⁵⁶ Many believe that their sins have been removed as far as the east is from the west.¹⁵⁷ Many believe and yet are not concerned at all with holiness and sanctification. These same people remind me of what the prophet Micah said, “*Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, ‘Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us.’*”¹⁵⁸

Notice a common thread running through all of these claims to faith? They have all bypassed understanding the reason for the Savior, ignored the greater part of the Scripture and relied upon their claim and the words of some faulty half-truth preacher, who cares more for his paycheck than he does the souls of the flock under him. He gives them just enough to feel good, condemn them to hell and keep them ignorant of the true Gospel. A great majority of Americans

¹⁵³ John 3:18

¹⁵⁴ Romans 10:9

¹⁵⁵ True Church Conference 2009 – Muscle Shoals, AL

¹⁵⁶ Ephesians 2:8a

¹⁵⁷ Psalm 103:12

¹⁵⁸ Micah 3:11

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professing to be Christians are left with a mental feel good theology that sets them up with a works based faith through an intellectual decision. The Scriptures must be taken in full context and spoken to the inner man by the Holy Spirit. These people seem zealous,¹⁵⁹ but for whose glory?

These very zealous appearing people have personally said to me, “*You are so spiritually minded that you are no earthly good.*” Where is that in the Bible? No where! The reality is that these people are so earthly minded that they are of no eternal or heavenly good whatsoever. Without full biblical knowledge and more importantly, walking in the newness of the Holy Spirit, zealousness is of no avail and leaves one on the edge of being destroyed.¹⁶⁰

Does any of this describe you? Know that knowledge begins with a fear of the Lord.¹⁶¹ Knowledge also means that you understand and live by the fact that it is only by God’s Spirit that anyone is spared from hell. How can we rescue ourselves if we are the ones in need of rescuing?

So where am I going with all of this? As you have already read in the beginning of this book, my desire is to help raise awareness, prayers, and Lord willing, the resources for the persecuted Christians and indigenous missionaries around the world. The conviction placed upon me, and many others, is to wake up the affluent and prosperous professing *christians* in the world, one person at a time if need be.

¹⁵⁹ Romans 10:1-4

¹⁶⁰ Hosea 4:6

¹⁶¹ Proverbs 1:7

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If people begin to wake up to the full Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, then true prayer, fasting, time, work and monetary giving will overflow the storehouses of blessings unto the persecuted and *badly battered* Church around the world. I pray that the Holy Spirit regenerates the dark and ignorant *church members* that fill the pews of prosperity.

“Half a truth is a full lie.”¹⁶²

The Gospel of salvation is not by our might. Not only is the Gospel not by our might, but it is not bound by our half-truth stories, books, sermons and our half-truth lifestyles. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not a half-truth. He is the only truth, the full truth, the supreme truth and the most sufficient truth there is. The Apostle Paul did not shrink from declaring the full truth¹⁶³ and neither should we. Only by the Spirit of God can we be saved – this not by our might. May we never be told, *“I never knew you; depart from me you workers of lawlessness.”¹⁶⁴*

¹⁶² Mark Olmstead – good friend and brother in Christ

¹⁶³ Acts 20:20, 27; Hebrews 10:38-39; 1 John 2:28; Romans 1:16; 1 Peter 3:15-16; Ephesians 5:11, 6:19-20

¹⁶⁴ Matthew 7:21-23

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“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Romans 8:3

Chapter 3

~ A dangerous claim ~

“For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God, and if it begins with us, what then will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And ‘if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?’ Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”

~1 Peter 2:17-19~

~ Intro ~

Before we get into this chapter, I want to confess something to you. As I sit here discerning the correct words to write for this chapter, an event happened recently that sums up the idea of a lifestyle devoted to God.

My wife and I took our children to the local beach. My children and I were playing in the shallow part of the river. Meanwhile a group of high school and junior high kids were playing water football up and down the waterfront. A couple of times the pile of kids would come close to my kids, but not a big deal, until...

On one particular play, the entire group of about thirteen kids came our way. Two of the bigger kids came within two feet of my three year old son, who was about 30 feet away from my daughter and myself. At the same time, one of the other kids, who was about six feet away from my daughter, yelled the *f-bomb* as loud as he could.

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Now, normally this would not bother me too much, after all I have worked with the homeless, drug addicts, drunks, demon possessed and every type of individual there is and nothing before got to me as this one incident. Before I could even think, a *drill sergeant* came out of me and I told that young man, “YOU WILL NOT USE THAT LANGUAGE AROUND LITTLE KIDS ON THE BEACH.” I said, “YOU ARE FREE TO PLAY HERE, YOU JUST WILL NOT SAY THESE THINGS IN FRONT OF THE LITTLE ONES.” What I said was appropriate and I said it *boldly* enough the entire beach heard me with clarity.

As I turned, I heard, “*What are you going to do, hit him?*” I spun around as if my children were being drowned. I demanded to know his age and I demanded his attention; I demanded an answer as well. While this was happening, I sent my children out of the water and up to their mother. One of the older brothers, of this hot tempered thirteen year old, came over as if he wanted to “*throw down.*” I demanded to know his age as well. He said, “*I am 15 and you threatened my brother.*” I said, “*No. What I said is that you will not use that language and I simply asked your brother a question.*” The brief confrontation came to a quick end and the kids went their way. It was over... or was it?

As I walked up to my where my wife was sitting, she said so calmly and gently, “*I wonder if that’s how Jesus would have handled that situation?*” Ouch – conviction of the Holy Spirit was in the air and in strength. I sat down and talked with the Lord. I said, “*Lord, I am supposed to take care of my family; defend my*

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family; protect my children. After all, there should have been some control on the beach and respect from the kids playing ball.” Then the Spirit replied, “These things you say are correct, but your initial reaction was very much wrong.” I did not want to talk to God any more about this, but I did.

As I sat there pondering these things only one thought kept coming to my mind, “*I must talk to them again and apologize. I cannot leave on terms like this.*” I really did not want to talk to God any more. I thought, “The verbal language of these kids appears as if they do not know the Lord. Worst of all, my verbal expression shows that I don’t know the Lord either.” The conviction of the Holy Spirit brought me to a critical point. He asked me, “What are you going to do? Walk in Christ or walk in your own fleshly way? You can’t do both.” Bottom line was that if my claim of being a Christian was real, I was going to have to choose to walk in Christ and listen to the Spirit.¹⁶⁶ The choice was mine. I began to walk over to the kids playing ball. What would I say? How will I approach? How do I show humility in my manners and actions? To choose humility is never the easy road, but it is always worth it in the end.

I squatted low by the waters edge and waited for one of the youth to look my way. I wanted to show that I had come in peace. I asked if the two brothers could come over to where I was kneeling down. I apologized to the younger youth, the one who was cursing, and said to him, “*Son, I apologize for flying off the handle. When I am with my wife and children I am very*

¹⁶⁶ Romans 8:26

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defensive for their well-being and I apologize for my abrupt action.” To the other brother I said, “I apologize to you as well.” I said, “I want to commend you in one thing though, I am glad to see you stand up for your younger brother. Never stop backing him. I hope you guys have fun today and play safe.” I held out my hand to show my sincerity. The older brother shook my hand and cracked open a smile. “Later bro,” I said, and I walked off. A million other things I could have said, but that is what I said. I asked the Spirit for words and that’s what I received.

It hit me on the way to the van, *“Those kids have never been apologized to in their life.”* I prayed for them and asked the Lord to forgive me and use my sin for His glory. I still hope and pray for their salvation and for a bad situation to become a good day they will remember. I also hope that these youth will show more respect and control for the things they say. Even though I handled the situation in a wrong manner in the beginning doesn’t mean God can’t use it for His glory. Unfortunately, I was not obedient in the first place.

Can you see how dangerous it is to claim to be a Christian? It is a lifestyle. What do you think the thought process of the youths would have been if I just left without obeying the Spirit? What about my thought process and my walk with the Lord. What would my claim have been if I just left without apologizing? Would my claim be valid if I willfully rejected the Holy Spirit? The reality is that if I am not submitted to Christ and walking in Him everyday, I have no assurance of my salvation.

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So what is it that my wife needs of me? What is it my children need of me? Answer: A husband/father who is completely saturated with the total truth of Jesus Christ. My biblical mandate is to lead and love *as Christ does the Church*.¹⁶⁷ This means I am to love my wife, showing her honor,¹⁶⁸ love and respect. I am to raise my children in love by *pro-actively* teaching them to honor God, exemplify living in faith by the Spirit and raising them in the discipline, instruction, admonition and fear of the Lord. This is commanded of all who have children.¹⁶⁹

But wait a minute, how can I present a true picture of Christ to my family if I do not know the true Gospel and what it means to live in Christ? How can I know the truth if I continually sit under preaching that is just a vague half-truth that is not submitted to the power of the Holy Spirit? How can I know the truth of Christ if I subject my mind to TV, Radio, Internet and books that are just the sinful desires of my heart? How can I speak the truth of the Gospel if main stream *christian* media rarely speaks the full truth? How can I know the truth and act out the truth if I do not have the truth in me? The answer to all of these questions is simple – if I am not abiding in the fullness of Christ Jesus,¹⁷⁰ I cannot operate in the truth at all! But what does this mean?

¹⁶⁷ Ephesians 5:23, 25

¹⁶⁸ 1 Peter 3:7

¹⁶⁹ Deuteronomy 6:7-9, this is not just for the Israelites, but all of God's children

¹⁷⁰ Colossians 2:6-7, more on this in the next chapter

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Abiding in Christ simply means that Christ must take up residency within me. It means I must be saved, born again, converted, regenerated¹⁷¹ or whatever title you want to give it. I have to be made alive in Christ and become dead to sin.¹⁷² I have to become a new creation in Christ.¹⁷³ This is a very real transformation that happens, and it must happen, otherwise I am not a Christian, and neither are you! Christianity is not something that you can create, nor something you are by mere title, words, deeds, intellectual decision or by *religious* ritual.¹⁷⁴ Only God can make this happen. There are no other ways and no other options¹⁷⁵ for eternal life and living in truth!

Salvation is of the Lord,¹⁷⁶ but we are not excused to laziness. We are to seek for God and His truth. We are promised that if we earnestly seek Him we will find Him. God views the heart of a person,¹⁷⁷ therefore only true seekers will be given the promise.¹⁷⁸ You see, true biblical transformation of a sinner results in the application of emotional, physical and spiritual action within a believer's life. A reaction occurs as a result of the undeserved supernatural work of the Holy

¹⁷¹ John 3:5-8, 14:16-17; Ephesians 3:14-21

¹⁷² Romans 6:11

¹⁷³ 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15

¹⁷⁴ Remember the last chapter? Not by our might, but only by the Spirit of God.

¹⁷⁵ John 14:6

¹⁷⁶ Exodus 15:2; Psalm 3:8, 18:2, 27:1, 37:39; Jonah 2:9; Revelation 7:10 – just to name a few

¹⁷⁷ 1 Chronicles 28:9; 1 Samuel 16:7; Jeremiah 20:12

¹⁷⁸ This is not to say the Lord will not and does not save whomever He wills.

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Spirit bringing about new life into a sinner, and thus creating a believer who longs to glorify God and walk with the Savior.

If this reality¹⁷⁹ is true of you and me, what then are we really to do in our Christian life? The ongoing theme throughout the entire bible is clear – obedience to the guidance and repentance to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Oh how dangerous it is to claim to be a Christian – especially if you really are not. What exactly makes Christianity such a dangerous title to claim though?

For a true believer, Christianity is all encompassing. It is both physical and spiritual; both present and eternal. It is true and alive; regenerating and life changing. This is what makes Christianity dangerous. To make the claim that you are a Christian and yet not be regenerated, is blasphemous and dangerous. The seriousness of the Christian claim means a radical lifestyle of sacrificial love, regardless of who the person is and what they have done! The seriousness of the Christian claim I want to present is not the hypocritical claim of the false convert, but rather the seriousness and very real present danger there is in following Jesus Christ. Now I must say, even though there are certain aspects of this claim that may seem hard, there is a tremendous joy and privilege when serving the living Christ in such ways. God did not give us a spirit of fear.¹⁸⁰ I want to divide the danger of our claim into three parts: Submission, persecution and a lifestyle.

¹⁷⁹ Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26

¹⁸⁰ 2 Timothy 1:7

~ *Setting the stage* ~

*“Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, ‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going out to war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, anyone of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”*¹⁸¹

One of the great things about the Bible is that throughout its living and rich word, it addresses all people. There is no one left out. The previous verse establishes this of Jesus, *“Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them...”* It did not matter why they were following, whether it was because they really wanted to be disciples, or thought they were followers already, came for the food, or came to hear new teachings or even wanted to question His authority, He spoke to them all.

This brings up the first of two points I want you to notice about this passage. Jesus is all encompassing. The Bible leaves no dividing line in the fact that no one is good.¹⁸² Everyone is either born

¹⁸¹ Luke 14:25-33

¹⁸² Psalm 14:3, 53:3; Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19

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again, by the Spirit of truth, into Christ Jesus or is spiritually dead and heading to hell. The Bible is all inclusive and fair. Much of the *weight* of the Scriptures lies heavily upon professing believers. The problem is that people, as a whole, would rather place the Scriptures upon someone else and not themselves. Many pastors today do not believe in the totality and sufficiency of the Bible and therefore do not adequately proclaim a full and true Christian message.

*“Whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. **Whoever** finds his life will lose it, and **whoever** loses his life for my sake will find it.”¹⁸³*

*“**Whoever** loves his life loses it, and **whoever** hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”¹⁸⁴*

Once again, notice that Jesus is encompassing of all people. “**Whoever** believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And **whoever** sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that **whoever** believes in me may not remain in darkness.”¹⁸⁵ These are just a few examples of the radical inclusion that the Bible holds all people to account. No matter what their beliefs may be, Jesus proclaimed, and continues to proclaim, all truth from the Father.

The second point I want you to clearly see, when we look at His promise/warning of persecution, is that He never promises prosperity in the flesh, the here and now, the physical fitness and monetary gain.

¹⁸³ Matthew 10:38-39 – bold mine

¹⁸⁴ John 12:25 – bold mine

¹⁸⁵ John 12:44-46 – bold mine

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True Christianity and faith in Christ is completely defiant against the flesh and even calls for the death of self¹⁸⁶ and the death of pride. True followers of Christ must get their hands around the ideas of submission, persecution and a lifestyle, sold out minute by minute, lived for the glory of God in Christ through the Spirit. Using Christ as a means of ones own prosperity and personal gain is a blasphemous and disgusting practice; nothing short of hypocritical religiosity and gospel ignorance. Besides, are material goods, a nice life and the *American dream* really a blessing from God or do these things distract us from Christ and walk with Him? How can they be?

*“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, **you will never enter** the kingdom of heaven.”¹⁸⁷*

~ Submission – the mandate ~

*“If anyone comes to me and does not **hate** his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he **cannot** be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me **cannot** be my disciple. So therefore, anyone of you who does not renounce all that he has **cannot** be my disciple.”¹⁸⁸*

¹⁸⁶ Colossians 3:5-8

¹⁸⁷ Matthew 5:20 – bold mine

¹⁸⁸ Luke 14:26-27,33

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Submission is a mandate. Jesus very clearly tells the crowd that if anything or anyone is placed higher in value, higher in status, higher in love or higher in the mind of a person, he cannot be His disciple. Three times Jesus says, “*cannot*,” in other words, never or impossible for you to achieve such a position with the Master. The clarity of the call to discipleship, to true Christianity, is so powerful in these verses that we ought to ponder and inject this section of Scripture into the hidden areas of our life with such thorough examination and introspection that we leave no areas open to faulty assurance. Submission means to place Jesus before home, before work and before closing up loose ends.¹⁸⁹ Submission comes before financial prosperity. Submission is to the degree that your heart is with Christ.¹⁹⁰

Jesus gives a stern call to submission by using the word *hate*¹⁹¹ in verse 26 which, in the Greek, has the meaning to detest or love less. The picture here again gives sobering clarity to submission to Christ first and foremost. No person is to be loved more than Christ. The three greatest stumbling blocks to true discipleship and submission are presented: loved ones, ourselves and our things. He calls for everything and everyone we esteem as good to become as loss¹⁹² in comparison to knowing and loving Him. The word, *hate*, here is to show the stark contrast, reality and gross difference of a truly submitted disciple versus one by mouth alone.

¹⁸⁹ Luke 9:57-62

¹⁹⁰ Luke 12:33-34

¹⁹¹ Gk: miseo

¹⁹² Philippians 3:8-11

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We are to value and trust Christ more than everything and everyone – period.

I find it interesting, and so sad, that when I read an article from so-called *christian* magazines in America,¹⁹³ I see entertainment, where to go for entertainment, man-centeredness, *church* growth information such as new and bigger buildings, sound systems, new programs and watered down, feel good, gospel denying blah. Yet when I read a magazine from Gospel for Asia or Voice of the Martyrs, and many others, I see life, people coming to authentically know the Christ, persecution and joy; I see new and energized lives. Now you tell me which do you think expresses the submissive qualities that Jesus describes? One is about programs, possessions and prideful gain and the other is about life changing new births in Christ, hard times and Christ exalting truth. Even the most ignorant can see a significant difference between the two.

True biblical submission is more than slapping the title *christian* upon a magazine, a song, a store or even a person. It is just as John the Baptist said, “*He must increase, but I must decrease.*”¹⁹⁴ True submission is not mere religious rules and rituals. These things have “*no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.*”¹⁹⁵

Submission to Christ is to lay down all *arms* and surrender to His mandate. It is to actively turn the Word of God inward, thereby letting God’s Word crucify our flesh, our minds, our desires, our plans, our

¹⁹³ not all, but most

¹⁹⁴ John 3:30

¹⁹⁵ Colossians 2:20-23

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traditions, our goals and our works. Such crucifixion of the flesh is all credited to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and nothing of ourselves. We are to bear our own cross,¹⁹⁶ meaning we have a Spiritual mandate and a serious duty to bear in terms of admission of our guilt, denial of ourselves, and more importantly, a true submission to Christ as Lord and supreme authority in our lives. Meanwhile, we are washed by His dripping blood, set free of our sins and becoming dead to sin and alive to Christ. Our very desires must be crucified to the degree that everything we once wanted for ourselves now becomes a means of honoring Christ in service to His children. True submission is a willingness to deny yourself and a permission to be presented with persecution.

Jesus, while praying to the Father shortly before His arrest, said, *“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.”*¹⁹⁷ Jesus knew what was in the cup. God’s holy and just wrath against sin was in the cup. Jesus knew He had to drink it in full for the redemption of our sins. He pleaded honestly and submissively to the Father, *“not my will, but yours.”* Oh, if you are a Christian how those words ought to make your heart heavy and your eyes to flow. His submission out-weighed even the cup of wrath. His love for mankind was displayed in His submission. The Father’s will was to crush His Son,¹⁹⁸ and the Son was obedient unto death. The Father did not allow His Son to escape the plan of redemption by

¹⁹⁶ Luke 9:23, 14:27

¹⁹⁷ Matthew 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42

¹⁹⁸ Isaiah 53:10

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being slack in His punishment for sin. The Father delivered the punishment and the Son was submissive.

Here is where the basis of submission to Christ is very dangerous. If you claim the name of Jesus upon any aspect of your life, then know this, the Father will not let you off the hook either. Punishment will be delivered if you are not representing Christ's name in a biblical manner. If you are truly His, then you will be disciplined as a child.¹⁹⁹ If you just claim to be His and you are relying upon another means or method for salvation, you will answer for the blasphemy of His Son's name.

Submission is to the authority, the Lordship and the Kingship of God's will. This may mean tribulation, persecution and hard times, although it is always accompanied by deep rooted joy. The truly submissive believer understands when God says, "*All things work together for good for those called according to my purpose.*"²⁰⁰ Submission is to love God for who He is more than His gifts and even the newness of our life. True submission seeks to understand God in His totality (which is a thing we will never fully grasp), love God for who He is and submit to the things about God where we lack a sense of understanding and maybe even dislike. Claiming Christianity is dangerous because it means Christ is always to be the center and focus above all else, at all times. Submission is a foundational reality to a regenerate and truly saved human being.

¹⁹⁹ Hebrews 12:5-6

²⁰⁰ Romans 8:28 - *his*

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“See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.”²⁰¹

~ Persecution – count the cost ~

*“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and **count the cost**, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.”²⁰²*

Grace is given freely, with no charge, to anyone who truly desires and truly walks in its lifesaving power. Christ does not ask payment in return for His propitiation, but nonetheless, a true and humble walk into the glorious grace of Christ’s atonement will cause an inner and outer submissive response to His Lordship. Jesus loves us so much that He warns us about the persecution that will be part of every true believer’s life. He calls us to count the cost of our Christian claim. This will cost us everything that we esteem higher than Christ, and it is experienced when our life is set on fire for His glory and His will.

²⁰¹ Ecclesiastes 7:29

²⁰² Luke 14:28-32 – bold mine

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*“Indeed, **all** who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus **will** be persecuted.”²⁰³*

I may not be able to present this section as well as those of the underground Church.²⁰⁴ For I have not yet been physically persecuted, but I have been slandered many times for the faith that God has given me. I have been labeled a cult leader, an extremist and a bible thumper. I have been told I am so spiritually minded that I am no earthly good (find that one in the bible). I have been called judgmental and legalistic so many times I have lost count. I have been shunned at a youth mission trip because youth from different churches would come to me at all hours of the night to further understand what a relationship with Christ is all about. The youth would end up broken and weeping for their sins. Here’s the thing, all of these statements have come from so-called professing *christians*; and I expect that to happen.²⁰⁵

The Word of God is clean and it cuts to the core of every human being.²⁰⁶ Persecution is a promised result of the new birth of a true Christ follower. It may not always be physical, but it will be a present reality, at least from time to time. This makes the Christian claim very dangerous – in two ways. First of all, persecution draws pain to the flesh in different ways, physically, mentally, economically and even

²⁰³ 2 Timothy 3:12 – bold mine

²⁰⁴ Believers around the world who are under current physical and mental persecution for their faith in Christ

²⁰⁵ Galatians 4:29

²⁰⁶ Hebrews 4:12-13

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socially. Secondly, the lack of persecution in a person's life provides evidence that one's life does not desire to be godly. Read 2 Timothy 3:12 again. All will be persecuted who are true followers of Christ! This is why Jesus warns us to seriously count, in other words, consider the costs to becoming His disciple.²⁰⁷

Joshua makes a similar type of *petition* to all of Israel. *"Now therefore **fear the LORD** and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*²⁰⁸ As with Jesus, Joshua declares that all take a serious look, a serious counting of costs, and decide who you're going to follow. And this is the question for you and I, who are we going to follow, God or money? Can't do both.²⁰⁹ Jesus makes it clear, as if He were saying, *"If I am not first, then you lie about the gospel in your life and the cross which I bore."*

The problem here is that most professing Christians, this maybe you, have been playing games in life by merely changing titles and moral living in exchange for the living Christ. The reality is that a dark title named *fraud* is stamped on the majority of professing believers hearts. The time is now to get

²⁰⁷ *Count the costs* – not only relates to persecution but to denial of one's self and picking up one's own cross. It is a radical call to a lifestyle of living in defiance to the culture. There is a cost.

²⁰⁸ Joshua 24:14-16 – bold mine

²⁰⁹ Matthew 6:24

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serious and realize persecution is a reality, and will be a reality, if a walk with Christ is valid and true. We must call ourselves to a deeper examination in comparison to holiness and the Scriptures.

Jesus said that in this world we will have tribulation.²¹⁰ This verse alone completely defies so-called *christian* health, wealth and prosperity gospel messages which permeates American culture. Anyone who preaches a different Gospel, than that of the Lord Jesus Christ, is to be accursed.²¹¹ Not only this, but everyone who believes such a false gospel stands spitting in the face of Jesus and all who have been martyred and are currently facing such persecution. The popular cultural christianity in this nation must come to an end willfully or be halted by God at judgment when He says, *“I never knew you.”*²¹² You see, to be heirs with Christ we must suffer with Him.²¹³

*“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”*²¹⁴

²¹⁰ John 16:33

²¹¹ Galatians 1:9

²¹² Matthew 7:21-23

²¹³ Romans 8:17

²¹⁴ 1 Peter 4:12-14, 19

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We ought not to be surprised at our trials, Christ has warned us. Do not be surprised that to whom much is given, much will be required.²¹⁵ Do not be surprised that the seed which appears alive really is dead.²¹⁶ It shrivels up and dies under the weight of persecution. Do not be surprised that we are sent out as sheep to be flogged.²¹⁷ We are called to suffer for His sake²¹⁸ and we are to be good suffering soldiers for Christ.²¹⁹ We are not greater than our master²²⁰ and we will be hated by all,²²¹ for Christ was hated first.²²² If we endure to the end, we will gain our lives.²²³

The true claim of Christianity is dangerous but it is one that we proclaim to be our greatest privilege. We hold this charge with serious intent, rejoicing and gladness. Yet, we remain constantly mindful of the sobering reality of what Christ has declared will be true.

“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.

²¹⁵ Luke 12:48

²¹⁶ Matthew 13:20-21; Mark 4:17

²¹⁷ Matthew 10:16-25

²¹⁸ Philippians 1:29

²¹⁹ 2 Timothy 2:3

²²⁰ John 15:20

²²¹ Luke 21:17

²²² John 15:18

²²³ Luke 21:19

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Yet it anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in the name.’²²⁴

Before I leave the subject of persecution, I want to ask you a very serious question: are you looking more towards an event or the daily intimate walk? Rapture or Christ? I have met many who claim to know the exact ways God will end our evil age, but few who are walking, looking, striving, praying and laboring with Christ today. Now don’t get me wrong, I believe we will be caught up with Him in the air,²²⁵ but don’t place more emphasis on the event rather than the One who makes the event happen. Walking with Christ today is the only certainty we have that we will be invited to the event. To be married to the bridegroom, you must be the bride.

I say this because American professing *christians* spend more time and money on worrying about and studying the rapture rather than helping the people who are presently being persecuted; and the numbers of persecuted today are higher than ever before.²²⁶ I would be interested to see the stats on the money spent for rapture study in comparison to the amount given to the persecuted and indigenous missionaries. We are commanded to remember the persecuted brothers and sisters.

²²⁴ 1 Peter 2:21, 4:1-2, 16

²²⁵ 1 Thessalonians 4:17 – don’t limit the way everything is going to work out in the end times to just your feeble mind. God may do things differently than we all know. Just walk with Him today.

²²⁶ Go to www.persecution.com and www.gfa.org to learn more.

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“Remember those in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.”²²⁷

We better get this passage engrained into our minds, because persecution, open and severe, will come to our land as well, not only that, but the lack of our remembering the persecuted may mean we are not a part of the body as we may think.

As the government continues to rebel against biblical values, the urging movement is for gross immorality, openness to express yourself (accept biblical Christianity) and dead religiosity and spiritual oneness (again minus biblical Christianity). Christians will begin to go to prison as false accusations are leveled against us, suggesting that we are murderers, thieves, judgmental bigots, slanderers, haters and evil cult members/leaders. If you don’t believe me, ask the millions of oppressed in well over 52 countries where the Bible and Christianity is outlawed, and the brothers and sisters struggle to survive day by day, holding fast only to their faith in Christ as their means to provide their every need.

During the 2009 Summer Olympics in China, Chinese authorities rounded up and hunted down as many pastors as they could so that the *voice of truth* would not be heard in world media. Brothers and sisters in Christ suffered while millions of people watched the most educated, wealthiest and healthiest people on the planet compete over a meaningless prize. The false face of China will not fool those who are

²²⁷ Hebrews 13:3

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hunted down, beaten, raped, jailed and martyred on China's soil. Ask these believers if the rapture is more important than walking daily with the Lord. Their faith and walk with Christ takes their full attention. I dare you to seek out what I am saying. The news media knows nothing about the present realities against Christians, nor do they care to find out for the truth is not in them. Sadly enough, popularized *christianity* doesn't care either.

We must seriously count the costs to our so-called *christian* claim. We need to seriously work out our salvation with fear and trembling²²⁸ and not in *comfort* and *laughter*.²²⁹

*“But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day comes upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have enough strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”*²³⁰

What has Christianity cost you?

With such persecution a reality to true Christianity, how indeed shall we act? *“For the sake of Christ, then, I am **content** with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am*

²²⁸ Philippians 2:12

²²⁹ James 4:8-10 – this is not to say we are not to be joyous, thankful and be content people in Christ.

²³⁰ Luke 21:34-36

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strong.²³¹ *“When reviled, we **bless**; when persecuted we **endure**.”*²³² Not only are we to be content and endure, for this is an idle reaction, but we are to take action by praying for our enemies,²³³ loving them, doing good and even lending as they have need.²³⁴ We are to be merciful as our Father²³⁵ and bless those who persecute us.²³⁶

*“Repay no evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ To the contrary, ‘if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*²³⁷

As I said earlier, the Christian life does not come with a promise of prosperity; it comes with something much better, blessedness²³⁸ and our eternal life. *“By your endurance you will gain your lives.”*²³⁹ Never forget the persecuted, for you yourself may be there soon enough. Let me say it again, *“Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are*

²³¹ 2 Corinthians 12:10 – bold mine

²³² 1 Corinthians 4:12 – bold mine

²³³ Luke 6:27

²³⁴ Luke 6:35

²³⁵ Luke 6:36

²³⁶ Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:14

²³⁷ Romans 12:17-21

²³⁸ Matthew 5:10-12

²³⁹ Luke 21:19

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*mistreated, since you also are in the body.*²⁴⁰ *“You will be hated by all for my name’s sake.”*²⁴¹

Do you remember the persecuted?

If not, maybe you are not in the body.

What does it cost you to help those who are persecuted? Time? Energy? Resources?

Or do you rather make a good showing in the flesh, such as visible church attendance, visible tithing, visible good works and visible practice of *good morals*, so that you do not have to seriously introspect and risk persecution?²⁴²

*“Only let the manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign of them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now bear that I still have.”*²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Hebrews 13:3

²⁴¹ Luke 21:17

²⁴² Galatians 6:12

²⁴³ Philippians 1:27-30

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~ Lifestyle – it's how you live ~

“So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”²⁴⁴

There is a very real and present danger in claiming to be a Christian and I address this with a question: Does the way you live your life, both public and private, give clear evidence that you are a new creation in Jesus Christ? Or would the evidence point you out as a hypocrite? By the way, the evidence of your innocence or guilt is held up against the word of God²⁴⁵ and by your very actions.²⁴⁶ Your innocence is not declared by your mouth, by your *church* attendance, by your ministry, by your profession or any other man-centered way, but only by the Word, Christ Jesus, and the testimony of the Spirit.

What exactly does lifestyle mean? It means the way you represent that which you are most dedicated to. It is the very essence of what you care about most, no matter what you profess, showing itself through your actions, words, and more importantly, your very thoughts themselves. Where your mind stays active, the body will eventually fulfill. A true lifestyle of discipleship means that you are a continuous representative of Christ as priest and a continuous member of the bride of Christ, the Church. There is no switching this off; the life stays flowing. There is no perfection while in the body, but there is continual

²⁴⁴ Luke 14:33

²⁴⁵ John 12:47-48 – more on this in the next chapter

²⁴⁶ Ecclesiastes 12:14, Revelation 20:12

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repentance as the Spirit convicts when we sin against God.

*“For the mind that is set on the flesh is **hostile to God**, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh **cannot please God**.”²⁴⁷*

A lifestyle of morality, man-centered religion and being a *good person*, in itself has only one value – eternal condemnation and sentencing to hell. Morality and religion is of no value to God at all. Morality is a tool that Satan uses to condemn and blind those who think that they are better than someone else and right with God; to hell with morality and to hell with man-centered religion. Life is only found in Christ!²⁴⁸ I have met pastors who will fight for religion, morality and denominationalism, but they will not preach Christ as most supreme, nor go out doing the sometimes hard and dirty work of true religion, that of true Christianity.

*“If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: **to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained for the world.**”²⁴⁹*

A Christian lifestyle is one that believes Christ is who He says He is, placing Him as supreme, and joyfully embraces His commands as life, while always

²⁴⁷ Romans 8:7-8 – bold mine

²⁴⁸ John 3:16, 14:6

²⁴⁹ James 1:26-27 – bold mine

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striving toward holiness. His commands are not seen as a burden,²⁵⁰ but as a privilege and honor. A Christ honoring lifestyle is one that is in constant preparation.²⁵¹ A true honoring lifestyle is more than mere rules and laws that are of no value and impossible to keep. A disciple knows that sin is more than the failure of rules. A disciple knows that sin is specific to themselves and they examine themselves to see if Christ is really in them as they claim.²⁵² Disciples understand and respond when God says, *“Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.”*²⁵³

The problem with our claim in comparison to our lifestyle all boils down to this essential truth: *“See, this alone I found, that God has made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.”*²⁵⁴ As for myself, too often I find that I chase after methods and plans, paths and ways, excitements and distractions that ultimately lead me away from Christ and out of the truth. Is this at all true in your life? Stop and introspect for a while.

We would be much better off and much more sold out for Christ, as a style of life, especially in our affluence and abundance of American life, if we were transformed by the renewal of our minds,²⁵⁵ took every thought captive to Christ²⁵⁶ and guarded our every step.²⁵⁷ We need to understand our need to strive after

²⁵⁰ 1 John 5:3

²⁵¹ Matthew 25:1-13; Luke 12:35-40; 1 Peter 3:13-17

²⁵² 2 Corinthians 13:5

²⁵³ James 4:17

²⁵⁴ Ecclesiastes 7:29 – bold mine

²⁵⁵ Romans 12:2

²⁵⁶ 2 Corinthians 10:5

²⁵⁷ Ecclesiastes 5:1

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balance and do that in holiness. Too much wisdom and too much foolishness both end the same way – in death.²⁵⁸ If we really want to lead a lifestyle honoring to the Lord, we will turn our laughter to mourning.²⁵⁹ This not being only emotional, but deep seated joy that prays in the Spirit, all while mourning from the soul for the children of God to be sanctified, and the disobedient to come to the knowledge of Christ through the Spirit wrought new birth.

“In my vain life I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evildoing. Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself? Be not overly wicked, neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time? It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them.”²⁶⁰

So how are we to live? *“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”²⁶¹ “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”²⁶² “Though a sinner does evil a hundred time and prolong his life, yet I know that it will be well*

²⁵⁸ Ecclesiastes 7:15-18

²⁵⁹ James 4:8-10

²⁶⁰ Ecclesiastes 7:15-18

²⁶¹ Ecclesiastes 11:13-14

²⁶² Micah 6:8

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with those who fear God, because they fear before him. But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.’²⁶³ The Lord is not confined to a temple or a building at some particular time. The Lord is everywhere. Having said this, I ask, where is our fear before God today, here and now? Do we strive to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God?

Oh God, help us to fear as we should. Help us to understand as we ought. And cause us to see the seriousness and danger in our claim to your dear Son – Christ Jesus the Lord! Amen.

“Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”²⁶⁴

²⁶³ Ecclesiastes 8:12-13

²⁶⁴ 2 Peter 3:14-18

~ Final thoughts ~

Has the Spirit of God confirmed with your spirit that you are truly His child?²⁶⁵ Are you living in the conviction of the Spirit?²⁶⁶ Are you experiencing the discipline of the Father?²⁶⁷ Have your eyes been opened in such a way that the sin you used to lust after you now hate? Have your ears been opened so that the things you used to listen to, the offensive and God hating things on TV, radio, and even the rumor mill of gossip, you now detest? How serious is your walk with Christ?

“Time is short. If we are not willing to plead in prayer for a mission revolution – and let it start in our own personal lives, homes and churches – we will lose this generation to Satan.”²⁶⁸

*“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. **For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was***

²⁶⁵ Romans 8:16

²⁶⁶ John 16:4b-11

²⁶⁷ Hebrews 12:3-11

²⁶⁸ K.P. Yohannan – Gospel for Asia – *Revolution in World Missions* – pg 134

naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

*Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you? Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'*²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹ Matthew 25:31-46 – bold mine

Chapter 4

~ Beware of the war ~

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”
~Ephesians 6:12~

When you think of war what do you think about? Blood and guts? War on drugs? Political war? War on terror? What is your concept of war?

If you are going to live victoriously in your Christian life, you must understand that there really is a war and know what that war is. You need to understand that it is the nastiest war of them all and realize that making a claim to Christianity and neglecting true warfare is dangerous.

This war is not about abortion, gay rights, drugs, prostitution, pornography, politics, religion, economics, healthcare or even a war on terror. It most certainly is not a war of good vs. evil. The warfare you need to understand is none of these things. It is a spiritual battle. And for the true believer you can bet this is the root cause of persecution, hardships, trials, temptations, tribulations and all the sin in the world. Although this is not to say that God is not sovereign over all things, all people and all created heavenly bodies. God is in ultimate control, lest we forget that.²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ 1 Peter 4:17-19; Job 1:6-12, 2:1-6

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If then there really is a spiritual war, let us find out if we are called to fight, how we are to win and who we are fighting against. As we begin to examine these things and assuming you are a born again believer, never lose sight of the following verses:

“Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”²⁷¹

“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”²⁷²

~ Setting the context ~

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance,

²⁷¹ 1 John 4:4, context 4:1-6 – more on this in the next chapter

²⁷² 2 Timothy 1:6-7

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making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.”

This passage is so rich with truth and depth that a better man than myself could exegetically write about these ten verses for hundreds, if not thousands, of pages and still say very little. I intend on writing little in order to spur you towards digging into God’s word for yourself.

I find it tragic that people read these verses as a cute little analogy, or create some half-hour sermon, while the pastor spends the greater portion of his time actually putting on articles of clothing in order to convey a message that they are unable to deliver.²⁷³ It would be far better for us to ponder and petition God over one verse, searching for Christ in that verse, than to read the entire bible just so we can say we have done our duty or we have accomplished some feat.

In verses 10, 11, 13, 14 and 18, we find our *marching orders* for battle. The words, “*Be strong, Put on, take up, Stand therefore and keep alert,*” are our commands to engage the enemy. There would be no reason to be strong unless there was a foe to face and a work to be done. There would be no reason to put anything on unless the need for personal protection from potential harm was not there. There would be no reason to take up something unless it was going to be used for a purpose. There would be no reason to stand unless there was a movement to be made. There would be no reason to keep alert unless a threat lies close at hand.

²⁷³ I have seen this happen.

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There would be no value in any of these things unless we are called to walk in them and to take action.

It is interesting to note that these words are descriptive of warfare. We are to get prepared, engage in conflict and always be ready. They are our call to constant awareness and renewal of the mind.²⁷⁴ These words affirm our call to battle and rebuke our comfortable, complacent, prosperous life of the American dream of laziness and selfish spending. These words call us to, “*act like men*,” and to, “*be strong*.”

*“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.
Let all that you do be done in love.”²⁷⁵*

These are words of victory and not defeat. We are not to submit to our past yoke of sin, demonic oppression and evil God hating ways. “*For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*”²⁷⁶

Within the context of Ephesians 6:10-20, we will answer the following questions: Where is our strength? Who is our war against? How shall we fight? Who are we to remember? How shall we proclaim the name? The context of these verses are so powerful that we must humbly fall face down on the ground petitioning God for Him to declare His truth, life and power deep within our minds. The power that has been given to us in this war is staggering to the mind. May we be found walking in Christ, empowered by the

²⁷⁴ Romans 12:2

²⁷⁵ 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

²⁷⁶ Galatians 5:1

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Spirit and victorious over our previous yoke of bondage.

~ Where is our strength? ~

*“Finally, be strong **in the Lord** and in the strength of **his might**. Put on the whole **armor of God**...”²⁷⁷*

Where in the previous passage do we see any room for boasting in the flesh? Where do we see our personal works, our personal beliefs or our personal man-centered methods as a way to winning spiritual warfare and defeating sin? No where! Why is it then we preach, teach, live, and talk as though we are able to win victories and battles through our own cunning and Bible defiant ways, our church growth strategies or our man-made methods and rules? In and of ourselves we are helpless to ward off even the mildest of sin and the weakest of demons!

This is why we must be in Christ. *“Therefore, if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. **All this is from God, who through Christ** reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation...”²⁷⁸* We must be a new creation, having the very Spirit of God confirming with our spirit that we are His.²⁷⁹ We must walk, as a style of life, in the strength of Christ. We must learn to seek the Lord and His strength,²⁸⁰ waiting on Him to renew

²⁷⁷ Ephesians 6:10-11a – bold mine

²⁷⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:17-18a – bold mine

²⁷⁹ Romans 6:16

²⁸⁰ 1 Chronicles 16:11

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our strength.²⁸¹ We can only be made strong by His strength²⁸² and in our weakness.²⁸³

It is the Gospel, the very essence of Christ, in which we are able to stand and be saved.²⁸⁴ We are to stand firm in the grace of God,²⁸⁵ the very power of Christ leading to salvation. If this grace has the power to reverse our death, keep us from hell and satisfy the just wrath of God's punishment against our sin, imagine the power given to true believers to fight and conquer the demons of this world; although we must never forget that the power is in the Lord, the strength of His might and His battle armor.

I love what Moses said to Israel when fleeing from the Egyptians just before crossing the Red Sea, *"Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians who you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and **you have only to be silent.**"*²⁸⁶ We can learn a lot from these two verses. If only we would place all our trust in the Lord, put away our spirit of fear, understand that it is the Lord who empowers our defense, remove our man-centered spiritless programs and allow Spirit filled men to speak at the pulpit, then we will see salvation break loose in our *churches*. To effectively do battle in the true life changing realm of a person's spirit, we must be in Christ, empowered by

²⁸¹ Isaiah 40:31

²⁸² Exodus 15:2; Psalm 28:7, 46:1, 84:5, 140:7

²⁸³ Romans 12:7-9

²⁸⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:1

²⁸⁵ 1 Peter 5:12

²⁸⁶ Exodus 14:13-14 – bold mine

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His Spirit and be completely encased by His armor. To vainly attempt battle any other way is powerless and absolutely no threat to the enemy whatsoever; worse yet, it leaves the souls of men heading to hell. God does not promise to honor any method, presentation or plan other than His Son Jesus Christ.

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”²⁸⁷

The biggest part of our battle, and Satan’s victories, is because we do not care to remove ourselves, remove our sinful desires and remove our plans. Let the Lord battle – He’s already won, so step out of the way, *submit to His authority* and crucify yourself for the power is His!

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”²⁸⁸ “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”²⁸⁹

If then the power is God’s, and we have been given the right to walk in that power and by that power, then who are we to not fight in and with that power?

²⁸⁷ Romans 10:17

²⁸⁸ James 4:7

²⁸⁹ 1 Peter 5:8-11

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If Christ be in us, who really then can be against us? We are called to fight, not by physical means of retaliation, but by the Spirit. One of the evidences of true salvation is that a true born again Christ follower will always wage war against sin, against the old nature, against the flesh, against hell, against all human odds, against the devil and against their own selfish desires. The Spirit is at war with the flesh²⁹⁰ - always!

So to say that you do not need to war against the flesh and yet say you are born again, is blasphemous and on the boarder of heresy. The Spirit always fulfills the will of the Father; therefore He will not let you *get away with* or do the opposite of what the Scriptures declare. If you are living in opposition to the Spirit and to the Scriptures, and God is not disciplining you through conviction of your sinful living, then you must seriously consider and come to realize you are not His child. Anyone who does not fight their own sinful flesh, and the devil himself, cannot have the Spirit of God in them. The Spirit of God fears no one and is not complacent towards sin. Any professing Christian that does not take the word of God seriously, and with grave responsibility, has no assurance of their eternal life with Christ in heaven. Caring more about politics, the news and the ways of the world, is not faith and is contrary to the Spirit. If you are a believer, then resist the devil, war against the devil, set hatred against the devil and war against your own flesh. This is a call to battle.

²⁹⁰ Galatians 5:16-18

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~ Who are we at war with? ~

*“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the **schemes of the devil**. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but **against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places**. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to **withstand in the evil day**, and having done all, to stand firm.”²⁹¹*

Ultimately the warfare is with the devil. The spiritual battle is with the very one who was cast out of heaven, deceived Eve, engrained man with a sin nature and tempted Jesus.²⁹² He is the deceiver of the world,²⁹³ the serpent of old,²⁹⁴ the original snare,²⁹⁵ and our true adversary.²⁹⁶ He disguises himself as an angel of light²⁹⁷ and is the prince of the power of the air.²⁹⁸ He hates God, hates the Son and hates God’s elect. There is no sin so perverse that he will not use in the attempt to destroy God’s people. And he is extremely successful in the false assurance of professing believers. He will do anything to blind people’s eyes, causing them to deny true faith.

²⁹¹ Ephesians 6:11-13 – bold mine

²⁹² Matthew 4:1

²⁹³ Revelation 12:9

²⁹⁴ Revelation 20:2; Genesis 3:1

²⁹⁵ 1 Timothy 3:7

²⁹⁶ 1 Peter 5:8

²⁹⁷ 2 Corinthians 11:14

²⁹⁸ Ephesians 2:1-3

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Satan condemns many to hell through his cunning by exalting works, religion, morals and good actions, in the minds and in the values of people. He is set on the destruction of God and His kingdom. He is most successful in working through human beings in two ways. First by getting people to walk in the ways of man-made methods, programs, preaching and good works, as a style of life, whereby the individual walks not in the Spirit, but in the flesh. Read, study and meditate upon the following passage very carefully.

*“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is **hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.** You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, **if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.** Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ **does not belong to him.**”²⁹⁹*

The second method Satan uses to deceive mankind is through the manipulation of fallen man’s sin nature. Much of the temptations and sin patterns in the life of an individual is because of inherent sin, thereby leading to pride, selfishness and rebellion.

*“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. **But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.** Then desire when it has*

²⁹⁹ Romans 8:5-9 – bold mine

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*conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*³⁰⁰

Earlier I asked who dares to stand up to themselves? Well, I am asking again, who takes me up on this dare? This war against oneself requires that we submit to God,³⁰¹ we deny ourselves and we follow Christ. It is continuous warfare with daily battles against our *old nature*. Battling with your flesh starts with coming to grips, and admitting, that you are a wretch to God and deserving the full force of His wrath. It is the admittance that, on your own, you have no hope of everlasting life in heaven. It is to admit, *“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”*³⁰²

Even though we battle with ourselves and war with our *old nature*, understand Satan is the chief culprit of sin; although this must not be an excuse for our sin or a justification for sinful living. Understand that those who walk, again as a style of life, in the flesh cannot please God, and worse yet, are in total agreement with Satan and the evil wicked ways of this world. Most of the wicked ways are whitewashed and covered by Satan’s ploys.

The war is real – it is spiritual – it is with Satan and we are called to do battle, only in and through the strength of Christ. So, how do we fight?

³⁰⁰ James 1:13-15 – bold mine

³⁰¹ James 4:7

³⁰² Psalm 51:5 – also read Genesis 6:5, 8:21; Ecclesiastes 8:11, 9:3

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~ How shall we fight ~

“Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.”³⁰³

How are we to fight? By *putting on*, and *taking up*, the *whole* armor of God,³⁰⁴ by resisting the devil,³⁰⁵ by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ,³⁰⁶ by going to war. For us to fight we must have armor, not partial armor, but complete armor. Not half of a belt of truth, but a complete belt reaching all the way around. Not half a breastplate of righteousness, but a complete breastplate. Not one shoe of partial readiness and a partial gospel, but a complete pair of shoes. Not half of a shield of faith, but a complete shield of solid defense. Not half a helmet void of salvation, but a complete helmet of assurance. Not half a sword with dull edges that is unable to cut the heart, but a sharp sword that divides bone and marrow. Do you get the picture? This is not a cheapened, man-made feel good message that is void of the Spirit of God, but it is the

³⁰³ Ephesians 6:14-18a

³⁰⁴ Ephesians 6:11, 13

³⁰⁵ James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9

³⁰⁶ Romans 13:14

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totality and perfect sufficient reality of the living Christ, the Savior, the very Lord of glory.

Before we take a closer look at the armor of God, I must address something that is very revealing about spiritual warfare. How a person fights this war reveals if he or she is a true believer. A true believer embraces the fullness of the Scriptures; a false convert denies parts of the original writings. A true believer enters into the battle with Christ as their strength through faith; a false convert relies upon their own ideas and craftiness to accomplish their own plans and ease their guilty conscience. A true believer cares more about Christ, His glory, His will, His people and a sacrificial sanctification than anything else in the world; the false convert cares more about feeling good, delivering a *good* message and doing *good* works over honoring Christ, as a style of life, in comparison to the Scriptures. A true believer relies upon the word of God as their understanding and guide to life; the false convert cares more about and trusts in man-centered philosophy and the news media as their guide to life. A true believer looks inwardly, admits their guilt and desires the death of their sinfulness; the false convert looks outwardly, never admits their guilt and blindly embraces their sin because justification of sin is easier than true repentance. A true believer shares the total word of God with other people; the false convert selectively decides that only parts of the Bible must be shared with others and is applicable to their life. Do you see the difference? Where do you line up against these statements? Stop here and get honest with the Lord of all truth.

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*“Therefore take up the **whole armor** of God, that you **may be able to withstand** in the evil day, and **having done all to stand firm.**”³⁰⁷*

If the armor of God is not put on and put to use, how are we to withstand the ploys of Satan? To *stand firm* requires that we have done everything possible in the preparation of going to war. This preparation is in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and is in agreement with the Father and in the renewal of the mind³⁰⁸ as declared by the word of God. How then shall we fight? By doing everything possible in preparation for war, by the strength of God’s might, in obedience to the Spirit, in the sanctification of Christ’s blood, whereby we put on and put to use His power through His armor. So what does that armor look like?

~ A Look at God’s Armor ~

~ Belt of truth ~

“Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth...”³⁰⁹

A belt is designed in such a way that its function is to secure, to hold tight, to fasten, to support. It is not meant to be broken or to break away. The same can be said of truth. And what exactly is the truth? Truth is the Word of God in the fulfillment of

³⁰⁷ Ephesians 6:13 – bold mine

³⁰⁸ Romans 12:2

³⁰⁹ Ephesians 6:14a

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the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone and everything rooted in Him and atoned for by Him, is of the truth. Everything, every way and everyone outside of Christ Jesus is not of the truth.

The belt of truth is the girding up of one's self with the very person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the girding up with the Spirit of God for action and defense against Satan and his army. It is to be a truly born again, lifestyle altering, warrior against self-centered pride, on fire for God's glory, Christ follower. To wear the belt of truth, you have to be girded with the truth, girded with the Christ.

*“For the law was given through Moses; grace and **truth** came through **Jesus Christ**.”³¹⁰ “Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the **Spirit is truth**.”³¹¹*

~ Breastplate of righteousness ~

A physical breastplate protects the most vulnerable organ systems during war time. It protects the heart, lungs, aorta, liver, spleen, pancreas and kidneys. No matter what the physical breastplate is made out of, no matter how thick or how hard it may be, it can never protect the most valuable portion of a human being – the soul. This type of protection will require a *breastplate* of a different kind. It will require

³¹⁰ John 1:17 – bold mine

³¹¹ 1 John 5:5-6 – bold mine

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nothing less than the righteousness of God. But what is this righteousness?

God's righteousness is not simply good morals and values. It is not good over evil. It certainly cannot be obtained through another method apart from Christ. It is the bold declaration and right verdict of God's holy justice. Through His justice, He uplifts His true children in sanctification and He makes the decision to pour out His holy anger and wrath upon those who rebel against His Son. Righteousness worn over the vitals of our life is the best and only protection against the devil.

To wear such a precious garment we must have the belt of truth secured to our spirit, with everlasting eternal life stamped as our binding of assurance. Without the truth, righteousness is impossible to attain. To act in righteousness is to fulfill the will of God as directed by the Holy Spirit; it is to do, in faith, that which glorifies God. Righteousness is God's holy action and defense against all sin in such a way that He has declared what is right, whereby He empowers justice to be carried out. Righteousness is the backing behind justice and the action of holiness. Righteousness is to be our style of life and eternal vital organ protector.

"The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge."³¹²

³¹² Psalm 50:6

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~ Shoes of readiness ~

“As shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.”³¹³

The shoes of readiness are the product and essence of the gospel of peace. It comes by no other gospel. The gospel of peace is the fullness of truth in the person of Christ. These shoes are made ready by grace alone. Anyone who has been granted the right to put on truth and put on righteousness has been given the readiness of the gospel of peace.

Shoes are built for movement, built to absorb shock and built for protection. The gospel of peace is our readiness. It births in us a desire to spread the word of God, prepares us for battle and gives us the discernment to dodge the temptations of sin that come speeding our way. But why the gospel of *peace*? Why did Paul add the word *peace* to describe the gospel? This is a question worth asking.

I believe Paul wanted to very clearly describe the one true gospel that he so boldly claimed, so that everyone understood that readiness was only found in the Christ, in the gospel of deep rooted joy and new life. This was not any old gospel, but this was the gospel of grace. This gospel of peace is not, and was not, like any other belief or religion. It is the only gospel where mankind could not make their readiness, ultimately salvation, happen through works. As with the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of readiness

³¹³ Ephesians 6:15

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began with the truth, Jesus Christ, as its very foundation. To be in the truth, and thereby born of the Spirit, shoes of readiness were given to true born again believers.

True born again believers are given a desire to share their new birth, share the testimony of their Lord and fight the good fight of faith. Believers do not say, “*My faith is private,*” or “*Who are you to ask me about my faith,*” or when shown the full council of God say, “*You are judging me.*” No, true believers desire to supplement their faith,³¹⁴ be transformed by the renewal of their mind,³¹⁵ and make disciples of *all* nations.³¹⁶ This becomes automatic of the truly regenerate human heart. Without such desires, one must seriously question themselves to see if the truth is indeed in what they are claiming. Need I yet again remind you that Christianity is a very dangerous claim to make and a serious accountability to withstand?

The shoes of readiness empower us to not be ashamed of the gospel,³¹⁷ make us ready to give an account for the *hope* that is in us,³¹⁸ and sanctifies us for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you been and are you now being made ready for combat? What are your shoes made of? How have you been made ready for defensive and offensive maneuvers against Satan?

³¹⁴ 2 Peter 1:5

³¹⁵ Romans 12:2

³¹⁶ Matthew 28:19-20

³¹⁷ Romans 1:16

³¹⁸ 1 Peter 3:15

~ Sheild of faith ~

*“In **all** circumstances **take up** the shield of faith, with which you can **extinguish all** the flaming darts of the evil one.”³¹⁹*

When are we to pick up the shield of faith? When are we to set it aside? How is it we conquer Satan’s attacks? You see we can find many answers by just picking apart the written Word of God. But what exactly is the shield of faith? How is it that this evil one, the serpent of old, can throw something when he slithers and sneaks around twisting God’s word? In order for us to further understand the shield, we better know a thing or two about who it is we are *warding* off.

We must first discard our limited concepts of who we think Satan is. He is not some little man wearing a red suit holding a pitch fork; nor does he just slither around on his belly. The “*ancient serpent, who is the devil and satan,*”³²⁰ not only is a deceiver,³²¹ but he “*prowls around like a roaring lion,*”³²² full of power, striking fear into the elect as a means to destroying faith. He is a thief whose aim is to kill and destroy.³²³ The devil is powerful and vicious. He knows that if he can destroy *true* faith, then his *flaming darts* will hit and kill his prey. He does not have the power to kill God, so he sets his eyes to kill faith in God. Satan knows if he can devour faith, he then cannot be beaten by any human.

³¹⁹ Ephesians 6:16 – bold mine

³²⁰ Revelation 20:2

³²¹ Revelation 12:9

³²² 1 Peter 5:8

³²³ John 10:10

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“And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.”³²⁴

This precious faith lives in the power of the gospel and in our weakness. Paul having been taken up into the third heaven, having seen visions and revelations of the Lord, had room for prideful boasting. He was given a thorn to prevent him from becoming puffed up and conceited.³²⁵ In his pleading, the Lord responded, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”*³²⁶ Paul then says, *“For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*³²⁷ This is faith! *“For he (Christ) was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you **we will live with him by the power of God.**”*³²⁸ This is faith! *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,³²⁹ to the Jews first and also to the Greek, for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘the righteous shall live by faith.’”*³³⁰

To hold the shield of faith is to live in the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, acting out righteousness in lifestyle and being sober in readiness. Faith is only a shield to the person who puts it to use. Faith is the present awareness of knowing Christ and the

³²⁴ 1 John 5:4

³²⁵ 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

³²⁶ 2 Corinthians 12:9

³²⁷ 2 Corinthians 12:10

³²⁸ 2 Corinthians 13:4 – bold mine

³²⁹ to truly believe is a style of life

³³⁰ Romans 1:16-17

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application of acting in His word, in His will and by His Spirit. Faith has eyes to see and knowledge to know that which God has already declared true. Faith requires obedience to that truth.

How then shall we extinguish the flaming darts of the evil one? By walking, as a style of life, in obedience to the truth God has declared in the fullness of Christ Jesus. Apart from this, your shield is nothing more than a delusional mirage and figment of the imagination, set on course for an eternity in hell. If your faith is in anything or in anyone other than Christ, then know that your agreement in life is with the prince of this world; protection then is void. Oh, how we ought to fall prostrate on the ground and worship our God. Amen.

~ Helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit ~

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God...”³³¹

Salvation is our helmet and this is in the hope of our joy, Jesus Christ the Lord. The helmet is an essential component to our armor. It protects us from the unsuspected blows of the evil one. Yet, we must not only wear the helmet of protection, but we must also wield the Word as our weapon of war – the sword of the Spirit. The Word is both our protection and our means of defense. But what is the Word?

³³¹ Ephesians 6:17

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The apostle John says this, *"In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us."*³³²

The Word of God is more than words written on paper, it is the full council and totality of who Christ is. Jesus is the fulfillment of the law.³³³ Not even one iota will pass until all is accomplished.³³⁴ But the written law was given from the very Word of God. The Word is the declaration and testimony of God's very presence. The Word is the very embodiment and empowerment to the testimony of the gospel. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation³³⁵ and this salvation is a very real transforming gift of God.

Jesus Christ being the cornerstone, the very Word of God, the living God/man born into the flesh, and testimony of the gospel of grace, validates and gives life to salvation. Therefore those who have truly been saved are given the Spirit of Him who has existed before our beginning. This means that if we claim to

³³² John 1:1-3, 14; 1 John 1:1-2

³³³ Matthew 5:17-20

³³⁴ Matthew 5:18

³³⁵ Romans 1:16

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walk in Him, yet we do not abide in His word, we are not His disciples and void of the truth.

*"If you abide in my word, you are **truly my disciples**, and you will **know the truth** and the **truth will set you free**."³³⁶*

This living salvation, for those who truly believe, has saved, is saving and will finalize those saved. This salvation is the predestined plan of God the Father for all people who, by faith, receive the Lord Jesus Christ, having been wrought by the Holy Spirit, in and through the redemption and obedience of the Son of God. Salvation is real; salvation transforms; and salvation is the empowerment to make a new creation. This salvation, having been saved, being saved and will finally be saved, is the vital protection needed for battle and the only *substance* hard enough to withstand the blows of the devil. All other forms and substances holding the *shape* of a helmet are white washed tombs and deceptive securities leading to hell. These false securities have no power to protect those who wear them - reader beware.

Paul says for us to *take* the helmet and the sword, that is, to take possession of, to grasp, to make our own. We must *take* this salvation and this Spirit unselfishly so that by faith and humility we can walk boldly into the battle with the knowledge of our salvation and the power of our spiritual weapon.

But how do we *take hold* of salvation? This is to earnestly, from a authentic cry of our soul, admit our

³³⁶ John 8:31-32

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guilt, receive forgiveness of sin and openly grasp on to Christ as the only means of salvation. It is to believe He is who He says He is and believe He will do what He claims He can do. Validation of having truly received Jesus Christ will always be a transformed life that is sensitive to sin³³⁷ and a growing desire for the things of God. A transformed and validated life in Christ Jesus will wield the sword of the Spirit with increasing measure.

"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account."³³⁸

Is there any wonder that the sword of the Spirit is the very Word of God? Christ Himself, the Word made manifest, is living and active, sharp and piercing. No one is hidden from His sight and He discerns – sees clearly – our true thoughts and intentions. The Holy Spirit is our helper and the very one who will *"convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."*³³⁹ The Holy Spirit convicts via the Word of God - His sword and our sword too.

If the Spirit uses the Word of God as the means by which we are convicted of sin, then how much more ought we to use the Word of God as our

³³⁷ Thought owed to Brother Paul Washer

³³⁸ Hebrews 4:12-13

³³⁹ John 16:8 – context 16:4b-15

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primary defense in warfare - war against our selfish and sinful ways of life and war against the father of lies? It is then extremely important that we are striving to know and live by the Word of God. What do I mean? If I am offered many different weapons in a war against an adversary and in my selection I am told which weapon is most powerful and unfailing, then I would be a fool to practice with any other weapon. I must engage my mind, will and emotions to consistently practice with the weapon I want to fight with. To choose a weapon that Satan can defeat is spiritual ignorance and sure death. How can I continue to stand if I have no offensive weapon that subdues my attacker?

Yet I see professing believers consistently choose a weapon of lesser power. I include myself when I say that they too often choose to fight using human logic and ways that consists of the flesh. I see pastors playing on the fringes of the war using clever human methods as their weapon. Unfortunately the results are always the same, outwardly positive trends appealing to the culture, but dead to God and powerless to overcome even the slightest of sin.

To fight with the sword of the Spirit is to begin by placing the mind on the Spirit. The mind on the Spirit is life and peace.³⁴⁰ If the mind is not on the Spirit, it is on the flesh. The flesh is not able to have any type of victory over Satan or sin whatsoever. This is why the transformation through the renewal of the mind is so important.³⁴¹ All flesh filled war strategies

³⁴⁰ Romans 8:6

³⁴¹ Romans 12:2

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are powerless and useless. The mind that is set on the Spirit produces life, thereby producing obedient movements necessary to win in spiritual battle. It is our spirit that needs to be guided by the Holy Spirit, so that we are able to rightly control our mind, our will and our emotions, unto the obedience of Christ, unto the slaying of sin and the physical denial of temptation and selfish living. This very process is the action and validating agreement with Christ that the word of God is true, and through that truth we are sanctified.³⁴² To hold high the sword of the Spirit, is to live a sanctified style of life in Christ Jesus, in obedience to the Spirit, and in rebellion to everything that God hates and in rebellion to that which hinders our life with Christ.

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us **also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely**, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."³⁴³*

~ Where it's really at ~

*"Praying at **all times in the Spirit**, with all **prayer and supplication for all the saints**, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an*

³⁴² John 17:17

³⁴³ Hebrews 12:1-2 – bold mine – context 11:32-40

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*ambassador in chains, that **I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.***³⁴⁴

As we begin to bring this chapter to a close, please notice the bold in the passage above. We are going to take a brief and specific look at the bold type here. Once again, there is an incredible amount that could be said, but it is better for you to search out the truth of this if you really desire to know. There are many biblical exegetical writings for you to read and study on this passage. I really only want to discuss three specific points from these verses: prayer, remembering the persecuted and speaking boldly.

Prayer is such an underrated and generalized overstated misnomer in our culture today. We talk about praying all the time. We talk about having prayer time and prayer meetings. We tell people we will pray for them and then never give that person even the slightest thought. We pray for our nation, we pray for our wants and we pray for a better life. We talk about praying to God; although we never question what *god*. We very rarely talk about prayer to the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we never talk about praying in the Spirit.

Pray, pray, pray cry the people in our culture. What good is all of our popular *christian* and culturally relevant prayer done in bringing us one step closer to God? Nothing! Why? Simply because any prayer that is not in the Holy Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ is in vain and does not have to be honored by God the Father. God may choose to honor those prayers, but

³⁴⁴ Ephesians 6:18-20 – bold mine

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He certainly does not have to answer any of them. The only prayer that He will honor is that of the Holy Spirit.

True prayer and supplication is that which is rooted in the Spirit and by the Spirit. True prayer and supplication is to petition God for what He has already declared to be true as spoken through the Spirit. Therefore He will do that which He has already declared. This prayer is always fulfilled; it is a *done deal*.

In our warfare, we are to “*pray at all times in the Spirit.*”³⁴⁵ How often are we to throw up pitiful, spiritless and selfish prayers? Never! To win against the devil we must talk to and petition God as led by His Spirit. All other prayer is second best in relation to God’s ultimate provisions and defeated by Satan.³⁴⁶

Sadly, much or even most of the prayer in the world today is to false gods, idols and figments of the imagination. Why is this so? The greater whole of humanity is unregenerate which is the main reason for prayers of vanity and powerless talk. Bringing this *closer to home* and specifically towards professing *christians*, most professing believers have no idea about the Spiritual realm. The root cause is a result of Spirit ignorant preachers spewing all types of easy-to-swallow venom.

Most preachers believe that the true way to build the Church is to preach a *good sermon* and correctly read the written Word of God. One problem, if the preaching of God’s word is not empowered by the Holy Spirit and in obedience to the Spirit, God does

³⁴⁵ Ephesians 6:18

³⁴⁶ Unless of course God so chooses to honor such a person’s prayer; in that case, the prayer was led of the Spirit.

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not have to honor such preaching. Once again, He may use it, but He does not and most often will not, bring a congregation to conviction and repentance. Without true conviction and true repentance, spiritual growth remains stagnate at best. When was the last time you saw a body of professing believers cry out because of their sinfulness toward God?

How can a congregation of professing believers know anything about the Spirit if the very pastors themselves refuse to teach about the Spirit, or worse, go to the opposite extreme by placing more value on the gifts of the Spirit rather than on the One who gives the gifts? How can believers “*keep alert with all perseverance*”³⁴⁷ if they know little about Spiritual truth and even less about living in the Spirit?

*“To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.”*³⁴⁸

This leads me to reiterate something I touched on in the last chapter – remembering the persecuted. In the last chapter I suggested that if we don’t remember those suffering persecution, we may not be what we claim. Why do I say that? Because the Spirit is one and we are to be of one accord. When we are told “*all the saints*,” that means the entire body of true believers. If anyone in the world shows the truest signs of having been regenerated, it is the people who have been and are continually being refined by fire.

³⁴⁷ Ephesians 6:18a

³⁴⁸ Ephesians 6:18

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Unfortunately it seems as though, at least in the affluent culture of America, these people are the least remembered. If we really remembered these brothers and sisters, we would thank God for their witness and sacrifice in some area of our life, and our ministries would support and encourage their physical, mental and spiritual life – and we would do this with passion. Worse yet, while we argue church doctrine and which version of the Bible is best, most of these believers live their faith never even owning nor reading even a portion of the Bible.

Most *churches* in America have more dust on the Bibles in their pews than the persecuted own in Bibles and that is a shame we bear. Although I say that figuratively, we must *come to grips* with the reality of our suffering brothers and sisters. We would be better off this next Sunday repenting of our greed and set our sights to the Lord's guidance than to listen to the great majority of the preaching. Bottom line is, how are you affected by what has been said here?

If hearing about the brothers and sisters who are suffering around the world does not move you, and their simple desire to know more about Christ and to own a Bible does not move you, then know that you should be very afraid! It may be that the persecuted are not your brothers and sisters because you are not in the family. Listen to what is being said here.

Now don't think that I am saying we should all have the same level of passion and do the very same things in regards to helping the persecuted, but we are all to remember them, petition God for them and tangibly show our support for them. It would be best

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for you to seriously study the Scriptures, seek the Lord's guidance for yourself and investigate just how serious and widespread persecution has become.

“To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.”³⁴⁹

When we really get down to the nitty-gritty of Spiritual ignorance and lack of knowledge of the persecuted Church around the world, it is because of what the apostle Paul is asking for in prayer in the passage above. Paul is asking earnestly for words to be given to him from the Spirit and the ability and obedience to proclaim the mystery of the gospel boldly as he ought. He wants us to petition God for this to be a *reality* in his life. But how is his prayer a problem for us today?

Paul's prayer request is much different than most of today's prayer requests from the pulpit. Spiritless prayer requests about a new building, new lights, new sound systems, better carpet, more, bigger, better are in constant supply. Let me tell you something, if God's desire is for you to have these things, all of which are fine in themselves, then you

³⁴⁹ Ephesians 6:18-20; Starter references for the persecuted include: Hebrews 13:3; Matthew 25:36; 1 John 3:17-18; For speaking boldly include: Acts 20:20, 27; Romans 1:16; Hebrews 10:38-39; 1 John 2:28, 1 Peter 3:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8; Ephesians 5:11 – these are to name just a few.

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don't have to plead with people to give. God either wants you to wait in patience so that He is the center and reason for the new plans, or He does not want you to have the newest thing or the ministry requiring another ten percent of the budget.

Where are the pastors who agree with Paul and plead with their congregations to pray for them to be given words and to *speak boldly the full truth* of the gospel?³⁵⁰ Where are the pastors who rather risk their nice home than waver one bit from preaching the loving conviction of God's Word through the obedience of the Holy Spirit? Where are all of the true Spirit led shepherds amongst the thousands who have been and are currently graduating as so-called – ministers, pastors and teachers? Where are the men of God who care more about the truth of God's Word than their own life?

You see if we do not have many pastors preaching boldly the gospel through the empowering of the Holy Spirit, how can anyone understand the things of God? Where are the elders in all of this? You see, to even dig into and search out understanding the Spiritual realm, we must listen intently to the men of old.³⁵¹ We must not only listen to these men, but we

³⁵⁰ Thought owed to Dr. John Piper

³⁵¹ Men such as, the Apostles of Jesus, Watchman Nee, Leonard Ravenhill, George Whitefield, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, John Flavel, John Owen, Charles Spurgeon and many others, don't forget the Anabaptists and the Puritans. Check out some of today's men, such as, Dr. John Piper, Paul Washer, Voddie Baucham, Jeff Noblit, Carter Conlon, John MacArthur, K.P. Yohannan, Conrad Mbewe, David Miller, Mikael Thomsen, David Ravenhill, Gene Edwards, David Wilkerson and others.

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must take their teachings and submit them to the Holy Spirit for truth and accuracy. We must desire and plead with God for Him to give us a desire to know Him more and love Him more and love His people as never before. We must supplement our faith and fight hard against every hindrance of the evil one, but we must do so through the strength of Christ, in faith, by the Spirit and with boldness, humility, an unwavering endurance and a sacrificial love for the brothers and sisters.

It is dangerous to make a claim to Christianity and avoid warfare. It is time for us to come to our senses and stop playing games. If we do not prepare ourselves in the present time, what do we think will happen when things really get hard? Don't take God's Word lightly.

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“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”³⁵²

³⁵² Romans 8:26-28

Chapter 5

~ Examine yourself – time to take a test ~

“What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.”

~Romans 6:15-19~

As we move into the final and most challenging chapter, I feel the need to reiterate a couple of points from the previous chapters. If we are going to examine our faith, we might as well begin by a brief overview of where we have been and say it in such a way that we may be spurred onto growth in Christ Jesus. After all, it is better for us to be slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification than to be slaves to lawlessness.

~ A challenging and brief look back ~

There is no such thing as a good or bad Christian; there are only true born again believers in

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Christ Jesus who are lovingly disciplined by the Father and those who are unregenerate carnal people heading for hell. If you don't love other Christians and all people in general, then you are a blasphemer and a liar. If you refuse the Word of God as if it is not applicable to you, and that to the point of making radical and continuous changes in your life, then you very well may not be a Christian as you claim.

Don't tell me you love God, yet do not fear Him. Don't tell me you fear God, yet refuse to live joyously in His holy and just mandates. Don't tell me you live in His mandates, yet they do not change your lifestyle and your attitude. And don't tell me you live by the Spirit, when you deny the power and truth of the Spirit as revealed in God's word.

It's simple, if you do not care about the persecuted, the true believers, the souls of all people, and in such a way that it alters your lifestyle through the process of sanctification, then how can you be a Christian? I cannot apologize for the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about new life and the transformation into a new creation.

If the Holy Spirit brings about no conviction, no repentance, no sanctification and no joy to you through this book, then you have read in vain and wasted much of your time. The flesh can only be crucified by the power of the Holy Spirit. Without the sanctifying work of the Spirit, the flesh is unable to put itself to death. If the message of this book does not cause you to desire the things of God, His presence, His Word and His truth, then you have received nothing here. At the most your emotions have been

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stirred, but you have received nothing Spirit led, nothing lasting, nothing fruitful – hence nothing eternal.

~ Moving forward ~

“The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”³⁵³

What powerful words of wisdom. Everyone is reading books, but what is the point if holiness, sanctification, joy filled purity, and most importantly, fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ is not our goal? Brother K.P. Yohannan, in challenging an American Church missionary board, said this, *“If your life is not totally committed to Christ, you are not qualified to be on this committee. That means you cannot use your time, your talents or your money the way you want to. If you do and you still think you can help direct God’s people to reach a lost world, you mock God Himself. You have to evaluate how you spend every dollar and everything else you do in light of eternity. The way each of you lives is where we begin our crusade to reach the lost of this world.”³⁵⁴*

These words ought to be a powerful reminder to us as well. Every one of us ought to submit to a

³⁵³ Ecclesiastes 12:11-14

³⁵⁴ K.P. Yohannan – *Revolution in World Missions* – pg 201

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thorough examination as to whether the truth is living in our verbal claim of faith. To this end, we will test ourselves using the book of 1 John.

But why take this look inward? I believe the answer is clear – our culture saturated *christianity* lives in sin, constantly strives to learn, but never “*arrives at the knowledge of the truth.*” If we do not begin by looking inward, how can we ever expect anyone else to examine themselves to see their need for Christ? Read every word of the succeeding passage very carefully, word by word, for this is our culture today.

*“But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, **having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, **always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.**”***³⁵⁵

~ Pre test ~

It is important to remember that our claim to Christianity is dangerous because our verbal claim ought to match the transformation of our heart. The transformation and new creation of our very being

³⁵⁵ 2 Timothy 3:1-7

proves our verbal claim to be true. Our verbal claim to faith means nothing if a new creation in Christ Jesus is not evident. This is why we must take a test.

As we now begin to dive into the book of 1 John, I must address two important issues. First we must remember to take the whole of the book in context and not just remove certain passages that meet our selfish goals. Although I am going to be specific upon select verses, it would be best for you to be *shut up*³⁵⁶ to God with the entire book and the totality of Scriptures.

I love how John Piper says it. He says, “*Don’t abstract certain sentences out of 1 John and turn glorious realization into mere imitation. Don’t do that! He’s not saying, ‘Watch God love and copy Him.’ He’s saying, ‘Watch God love you, and believe, and know it, and be changed by it, and be swept through by it, and then be it.’ That is what he is saying. And of course it’s a duty, but if you focus on the ought abstracted from the transformation of the new birth and the indwelling of God almighty abiding in you, doing His own love through you, you won’t have Christianity, you will have moralism. Read the whole book and keep the sentences together.*”³⁵⁷

The second issue I want to address is the purpose of why John is writing this book in the first place. Eleven times John writes the phrase, “*I write...*,” or “*I am writing...*” John wants us to know, without

³⁵⁶ Meaning to be totally enclosed with God without distractions of any sort – this is the style of life and language of men who desire God and His glory – not selfish agendas.

³⁵⁷ John Piper – *You Must Be Born Again* series #12 – *The New Birth Produces Love*

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doubt, his reason for penning such wonderfully inspired words. Let's look below.

“And we are writing these things so that our joy maybe complete.”³⁵⁸

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.”³⁵⁹

“I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.”³⁶⁰

“I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father.”³⁶¹

“I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”³⁶²

“I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.”³⁶³

³⁵⁸ 1 John 1:4

³⁵⁹ 1 John 2:1

³⁶⁰ 1 John 2:12

³⁶¹ 1 John 2:13

³⁶² 1 John 2:14

³⁶³ 1 John 2:21

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“I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.”³⁶⁴

“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.”³⁶⁵

The overwhelming reason for John’s writing is the love of Christ for all believers and the building of the true body, the Church. In the midst of John’s great love, the truth and challenge that he writes not only ensures the assurance of a true born again believer, but it cuts to the core and exposes those who are the carnal unsaved *church* members.

Let’s begin by asking a few questions based off of the previous verses. The pre-examination begins now.³⁶⁶

Pre-exam

1. How many times does John say he is writing to men and fathers? Why do you think that this is significant?
2. What or who does John intend to expose? Think about this as you read through the entire book.
3. John is writing so that we may not do what?
4. Ultimately, John wants us to know what?³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ 1 John 2:26

³⁶⁵ 1 John 5:13

³⁶⁶ Remember, all verses are from the English Standard Version (ESV)

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5. In whose name are sins forgiven?
6. Can any portion of a lie be of the truth?
7. If we willingly only tell half the truth, are we not deceivers, and if deceivers, are we not also liars?

As with the entire bible, 1 John is the wonderfully written Word of God that leads to sanctification and the separation of sheep and goats. The reading of the written Word of God must have the Holy Spirit revealing the truth of the words or else it is of the flesh and the ultimate truth cannot be known. Seek to have a deeper longing and sincere experiential relationship with the Father. Ask the Father for such a desire.

~ Test time ~

“Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you fail to meet the test!”³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ 1 John 5:13

³⁶⁸ 2 Corinthians 13:5

Test #1

“If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.”³⁶⁹

1. Can you identify the importance of a verbal claim in comparison to, and identified by, a style of life in this verse?
2. What does *fellowship* mean?
3. What does it mean to *walk in darkness*?
4. Should our verbal claim to faith be followed by practicing the truth?
5. If the style of our life does not agree with what we claim, what are we called? (Look at the middle of the verse.)

“We have hope and we ought to speak from that hope; for we have an impact we are not aware of.”³⁷⁰

³⁶⁹ 1 John 1:6 – more verses to ponder: John 3:21, 12:35; 2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 John 2:4, 6

³⁷⁰ Dale Johnson – brother in Christ and friend

Test #2

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”³⁷¹

1. This verse says, “*we have no sin.*” What does, “*have no sin,*” mean?³⁷²
2. Who is deceived by thinking *we have no sin*?
3. What does it mean to be deceived?
4. According to the verse above, can a deceived person have the truth in them?
5. If the truth is not in us, then can we be in fellowship with the truth?
6. Jesus says, “*I am the way, and **the truth**, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*”³⁷³ If Jesus is the truth, and if we are deceived to only think we know the truth, can we be in fellowship with Him?
7. Do you see the danger in making a claim to Christ while denying that mankind, more specifically each one of us, are radically depraved?

“Check and double check with the Creator. How else will we know the validity of our faith?”³⁷⁴

³⁷¹ 1 John 1:8

³⁷² Notice it does not say, “*we have not sinned.*”

³⁷³ John 14:6 – bold mine

³⁷⁴ author comment

Test #3

“And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”³⁷⁵

Before asking any questions here, go back and read verses 2:1-2. Taking this into context, we find that John is not talking about sinless perfection, but once again a style of life.

The least understood *person* of the Trinity by professing Christians is the Holy Spirit. This is partially due to pastors who have only a mental concept of the Spirit rather than an experiential reality of Spiritual truth. It is important to note that through the power of the Holy Spirit, and only the Holy Spirit, can we walk like Christ in perfection.

1. According to the previous verse, how is it we have come to know Him?
2. If we say we know Him, yet as a style of life continue to break His commandments, what are we called?
3. Based off of the previous question, if you are labeled with such a title, can Christ then be in you?

³⁷⁵ 1 John 2:3-6

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4. How can we be sure that we are in Him? (vs. 6)
5. If we are to know how Jesus walked, should we study only a select few verses or the totality of the Scriptures? Remember, Jesus is the fulfillment of the law, the written Word of God. Having said this, Jesus Himself warns about hypocritical claims to God and unrepentant people heading to hell – ought we not do the same? If so, how should we preach such a message? (Hint: study boldness, humility and intercessory prayer)

“Does His(Christ’s) love control our life?”³⁷⁶

Test #4

“Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.”³⁷⁷

1. What does it mean to say you are *in the light*?
2. What does *brother* mean?
3. What does *darkness* refer to?
4. Let’s say there are people in a church *fighting* or *greatly discussing* certain church rules or even the placements of decorations. If during, or shortly there after the *discussion*, someone is not convicted of their sin, and

³⁷⁶ Max Rountree – brother in Christ and friend

³⁷⁷ 1 John 2:9 – read 2:7-14 for context

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does not repent and seek the forgiveness of another, now can such a person or persons say they are of the light? Does God discipline His children? (Hebrews)

5. If a person is in darkness, can they be a true believer? (Back this up with specific Scriptures)

6. Biblically, is there such a thing as a carnal Christian? (You would do well to search this out and see when this use of language began. It will be next to impossible to support this biblically.)

7. Can you walk in both darkness and light at the same time?

“If I say I have learned, I then realize I have learned very little.”³⁷⁸

Test #5

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”³⁷⁹

Who is the prince of this world? Who is the *father* of this world? You will cherish the things of your

³⁷⁸ author comment

³⁷⁹ 1 John 2:15-17

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father; therefore if you cherish and esteem the things of this world higher than the servant-hood of Christ, you have chosen to follow a *lesser father*, the *father* of this world, the *father* of lies. Most people are in such a position. The following poem is the anthem cry of the majority of people, whether they know it or not. It is the song of this world.

*“When I grow up I want to be like daddy
He’s strong and smart and neat
He dries my tears and laughs with me
Sometimes he brings me a treat
He works real hard, but that’s OK
Cause someday I want to, too,
Have a job and do the work
That’s what I want to do
My hands real big, my muscles strong
Someday I’ll be like that
Lift big things and move the load
I like to wear his hat
It comes down over my ears
I’m just a little kid
But someday when I grow up
I’ll be just like my dad”³⁸⁰*

1. In verse 15, do you see both the mandate and the warning?
2. In the world, who is it that supplies the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions?

³⁸⁰ Dale Johnson – Carlsbad, NM 2009 – brother in Christ and friend

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3. What does it mean to *do the will of God*?
4. If you walk in darkness as a style of life, you cannot know the truth. (1 John 2:11) If you do not know the truth, how can you understand the *will of God*?
5. If you do not have the truth, you have not been born of the Spirit; therefore, how can you fulfill God's will without the Spirit as your helper?
6. So what then is the most essential and most culturally defiant way to begin fulfilling the *will of God*?³⁸¹

To do the will of God is to have the blessed hope of Jesus Christ in you, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and a striving with the Spirit through perseverance unto glorification. This means to have our spirit made alive, in unison with the Holy Spirit and, by faith alone, allow Him to guide us. We are to live by the Spirit in fulfilling the purposes of God while living in a crooked and twisted world.

*"You can't say Christ is all you need until He's all you have."*³⁸²

³⁸¹ Study conviction, submission, obedience and the receiving of Christ Jesus. Also see 1 John 3:23

³⁸² Leonard Ravenhill – message – *"Do These Things Move You?"* – original quote from unknown pastor.

Test #6

“Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.”³⁸³

1. Can you identify the key word linking (once again) to a style of life?³⁸⁴
2. If we deny Christ as a style of life, are we not a liar?
3. The bible says many antichrists will come before the final antichrist.³⁸⁵ So what are people called who reject the full council of Jesus Christ the Son and God the Father?
4. If a person, no matter their beliefs, denies Jesus Christ the Son, can they truly worship God the Father?
5. If a person, as a style of life, confesses the Son, are they then truly worshipping God the Father? (assuming they are worshipping in the Spirit)
6. Is it not true that everyone who denies Christ is then destined for hell?³⁸⁶

³⁸³ 1 John 2:22-23

³⁸⁴ hint – in the last sentence of vs. 23

³⁸⁵ 1 John 2:18

³⁸⁶ Remember, this denial is not just verbal, but a lifestyle; therefore it can be said that many so-called professing *christians* are in serious trouble.

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“O if you do not take care, a form of religion will destroy your soul; you will rest in it, and will not come to Jesus Christ at all.”³⁸⁷

Test #7

“And now, little children, abide in him. So that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.”³⁸⁸

³⁸⁷ George Whitefield – *Select Sermons of George Whitefield*, pg 91 – Reprinted 1997, The Banner of Truth Trust, 3 Murrayfield Road, Edinburgh EH12 6EL; PO Box 621, Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013, U.S.A.

³⁸⁸ 1 John 2:28-29, 3:3-10

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1. In whom are we to abide?
2. What is the importance of this?
3. What does it mean to *practice righteousness*? Does this mean to just do good things in our sight, or does it mean to fulfill the will of God?
4. Who is it that *purifies himself*?
5. What does *lawlessness* mean?
6. Based off the last question, just how bad is sin in God's eyes? Remember, He sent His Son to abolish sin.³⁸⁹
7. Can you continue in sin and abide in God? (3:6)
8. The one who continues to practice sin is of whom?
9. Are you making a practice of some sin?
10. Can a person born of God continue in sin? (3:9).
11. If someone is living in sin, yet professes Christ, are we judging them by bringing their style of life to light or loving them?

³⁸⁹ hint: start with Isaiah 64:6. If our righteous deeds, apart from Christ, are this bad, imagine our sin.

Test #8

“Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him.”³⁹⁰

1. If you do not love, where do you abide?
2. If Christ laid his life down for us, who should we lay our lives down for?
3. If we know that there are suffering brothers and sisters in Christ who need the very things that we have and we do not give willingly, does God’s love really abide in us as we may claim?
4. Based off the Scriptures, are there any geographical boundaries in aiding the body of believers?
5. Not to dismiss the needs of our own brothers and sisters locally, but where is the greatest need and the greatest persecution of believers in the world today?³⁹¹

³⁹⁰ 1 John 3:14b-19

³⁹¹ Start by examining the people in the 10/40 window, although our land will become violent soon enough.

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6. If the abundant believers in the world do not come to the aid of the poorest believers in the world, who then is going to help?

7. If the most abundant believers refuse to do everything possible to aid the poorest believers, then do the most abundant really have the love of Christ in them and the reality of true salvation?

“If Satan were smart, would it not be better for him to give all the things of this world to the true children of God? That way they would become numb to the Truth, blind to the Christ, deaf to the Word and completely mesmerized by every sort of gadget and trinket. Instead, he gives more to those who are already blind, yet think they are not, and he gives persecution to those who are true followers of Christ, thus leading them into greater worship, greater prayer and a greater faith!”³⁹²

Test #9

“And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.”³⁹³

In test #5, question #6, I asked what it means to do the will of God. As a reminder, let’s look back for a moment. In 2:17, John says, *“And the world is*

³⁹² author comment

³⁹³ 1 John 3:23-24 – context 3:19-22

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passing away along with it's desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever." John then says in 3:22, "...and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him." The answer to test 5, question 6, verse 2:17 and verse 3:22 is found in verse 3:23. Having said this, let's get to our questions.

1. What is His commandment(s) found in verse 3:23?
2. What does it mean to *believe*?
3. Does a person's belief(s) shape the style of that person's life?
4. If so, we can then say that a person who lives a lifestyle, this being the totality of public and private life, gives adequate evidence as to whether their verbal claim is true or not. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
5. If any aspect of our life is willingly held back from the Christian claim that we make and the power of the Holy Spirit, can we make God honoring decisions in that area of our life?
6. If we are not able to make God honoring decisions in these certain areas when we willingly push Christ to the wayside, how can we then be sure that we are His in the first place?
7. Can Grace be used as an excuse to make our own decisions?

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Some areas of your life to ponder are: situations at work, times of being alone, places that you go to, at the voting booths, in politics, in school and in proper stewardship of funds while Christians around the world are suffering greatly.

“My friends, we mistake a historical faith for a true faith, wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God.”³⁹⁴

Test #10

“We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”³⁹⁵

1. Whoever knows God does what?
2. Do the people who don't listen to the apostles teaching know God?
3. If we deny any part of the Scriptures and refuse to accept God's written Word, do we really then know God? How can we refuse God's Word and claim to be a Christian?³⁹⁶

³⁹⁴ George Whitefield – *Select Sermons of George Whitefield*, pg 84 – Reprinted 1997, The Banner of Truth Trust, 3 Murrayfield Road, Edinburgh EH12 6EL; PO Box 621, Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013, U.S.A.

³⁹⁵ 1 John 4:6 – context 4:1-5

³⁹⁶ Read what 2 Timothy 3:14-17 has to say.

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4. Can we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error?
5. If anyone, any *church* or any pastor chooses only to preach upon certain Scriptures while never diving in with equal depth into the totality of Scriptures, are they really listening to the full council of God? If not, then they must be of the *spirit of error*.

Test#11

“And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”³⁹⁷

1. What is *the* testimony?
2. Eternal life is life in whom?
3. What other options are there for eternal life?
4. If life is only in Christ Jesus, then any other message must be death. Do you agree or disagree? If you disagree, make your case using the Scriptures.
5. Where in the Scriptures are we given authority to preach any other way or any other life than the risen Savior?

³⁹⁷ 1 John 5:12 – context 5:6-11

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6. Would it not be plausible to say that the best life now would be one that has the Savior, denies oneself of fleshly desires and joyfully embraces the full council of Christ regardless of persecution? If life is only in Christ, then we need to drop our human efforts of self-improvement and receive the risen Savior via the Holy Spirit.

Test#12

“We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.”³⁹⁸

1. Can a true born again child of God continue sinning as a style of life?
2. Can we know, based on visible fruits, who is truly regenerated?³⁹⁹
3. Who does the work in sanctification?
4. Can Satan take over a true child of God?
5. Are you justifying some continual sin pattern in your life?

³⁹⁸ 1 John 5:18

³⁹⁹ Read Matthew 7:15-20 as well.

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6. Are you committing fornication? Is your dating life edifying for a believer? Do you even know what is biblically edifying?

7. Men, and even women, are you mentally in pursuit of someone outside of your marriage? Are you hooked into a mental sexual affair and physical masturbation?

8. Do you go to the bars while twisting the Scriptures by saying Jesus hung out with sinners? Jesus did go eat with the sinners, but he always had a message leading to the truth.

9. Is your evangelism based on relationships alone, without the Word of God ever being mentioned? God never promises that your relationship building alone will bring anyone one step closer to the Son or salvation to another.⁴⁰⁰

10. Do you live your *christian* life hidden behind only a small part of the Scriptures, or do you strive to understand and live in the *full council of God*?

The verse above is straight forward and to the point. No matter what you think sin may be or how you try to justify your lifestyle, if what you believe, and subsequently your lifestyle, does not line up with the Word of God in Christ Jesus, you have no certainty that you are His child. Strive to work out your salvation as far as the Father has given you the ability in

⁴⁰⁰ Look at Romans 1:16 to see what has the power of God that leads to salvation.

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examining your claim to His precious Son. This cannot be taken seriously enough. Unfortunately, many will shrug their shoulders and listen to their own carnal thoughts rather than repent and humble themselves before almighty God. One day everyone will bow, but will you bow willingly or with broken knees? Either way, we will all bow.

“Be firm upon God and His truth.”

~ Verses to introspect ~

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”⁴⁰¹

As a pattern and style of life, where does your mind stay focused? Is it on the Lord Jesus Christ? If not, then where or what is it placed on? This place is what you think about most. Wherever your mind is most focused, this is your idol. Reader beware.

I highly suggest that you seriously ponder, pray through and seek to understand the next few passages.

“This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.”

“But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

“Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for

⁴⁰¹ 1 John 5:21

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these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.”⁴⁰²

“Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.”⁴⁰³

⁴⁰² 2 Peter 3:1-3, 8-9, 11-14 – context all of chapter 3

⁴⁰³ 2 John 8-9

~ Quote to introspect ~

‘I am obligated then to say plainly, that, in my judgment, we have among us neither the men nor the doctrines of the days gone by. We have none who preach with such peculiar power as Whitefield or Rowlands. We have none who in self-denial, singleness of eye, diligence, holy boldness, and unworldliness, come up to the level of Grimshaw, Walker, Venn, and Fletcher. It is a humbling conclusion; but I have long felt that it is the truth. We lack both the men and the message of the last century. What wonder if we do not see the last century’s results. Give us like men and a like message, and I have no fear that the Holy Ghost would grant us like results.

Wherein do evangelical Churchmen fall short of their great predecessors in the last century? Let us look this question fairly in the face. Let us come to particulars. They fall short in doctrine. They are neither so full nor so distinct, nor so bold, nor so uncompromising. They are afraid of strong statements. They are too ready to fence, and guard, and qualify all their teaching, as if Christ’s gospel was a little baby, and could not be trusted to walk alone. They fall short as preachers. They have neither the fervour, nor fire, nor thought, nor illustration, nor directness, nor holy boldness, nor grand simplicity of language which characterized the last century. Above all, they fall short in life. They are not men of one thing, separate from the world, unmistakable men of God, ministers of Christ everywhere, indifferent to man’s opinion, regardless who is offended, if they only preach truth, always about their Father’s business, as Grimshaw and Fletcher used to be. They do not make the world feel that a prophet is among them, and carry about with them their Master’s presence, as Moses when he came down from the

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mount. I write these things with sorrow. I desire to take my full share of blame. But I do believe I am speaking the truth.”⁴⁰⁴

~ J.C. Ryle ~

⁴⁰⁴ J.C. Ryle – *Select Sermons of George Whitefield* , pgs 44-45 – Reprinted 1997, The Banner of Truth Trust, 3 Murrayfield Road, Edinburgh EH12 6EL; PO Box 621, Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013, U.S.A.

~ Final challenge ~

I would be derelict if I did not propose to you one final challenge. The following passage is one of great warning, power and prophecy. It was absolutely relevant the day the Lord spoke it forth and has been ever since. It is especially relevant and very much true for us today. You would do well to find much time, whether it be on different days or consecutive hours, to lock into a quiet place with the almighty Lord of Lords and King of Kings in prayer, introspection and His divine revelation. Seek, ask and listen for His truth about this passage to how it pertains to both our modern worldwide culture today and especially to you personally. The Lord's Word is not to be taken lightly nor with your own flesh-twisted slant.

*“Thus says the LORD:
Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool;
what is the house that you would build for me,
and what is the place of my rest?
All these things my hand has made,
and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD.
But this is the one to whom I will look:
he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.
He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man;
he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck
he who presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig's blood;
he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who
blesses an idol.
They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their
abominations;*

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*I also will choose harsh treatment for them and bring their fears
upon them, because when I called, no one answered,
when I spoke they did not listen;
but they did what was evil in my eyes and chose that in which I
did not delight.”⁴⁰⁵*

⁴⁰⁵ Isaiah 66:1-4

~ *My plea* ~

“So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord for a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.”⁴⁰⁶

We spend so much time doing things we think are noble, when in reality God hates our nobility. Rather the things that are noble in His eyes we far too often dismiss as weak, meaningless and insensible. We need to stop praying for God to be on our side; instead we need to pray that God changes our heart so that we can be on His side. Is your claim to Christ as valid as you may think? *Christianity is a dangerous title to live. Professing to be a Christian is a dangerous title to claim!*

⁴⁰⁶ 2 Timothy 2:22-26

~ *Author bio* ~

Before Christ –

Before God's gracious and merciful regeneration of my life, I was a sinner to the fullest definition. I was a liar, a thief, an adulterer, a drunk, a malicious gossip and a flat out God hater. In my use, or abuse, of women, I was truly a *murderer* at heart – not physically, but spiritually. I cared only for my selfish, materialistic and prideful arrogance. I used profanity as communication, anger as a lifestyle and deceit as my justification. I grew up in the *church* and yet denied God. But praise be to God that He showed me, a miserable sinner, His grace, mercy and love. Only to Him is credit due!

His wake up –

On May 18th of 2001, God woke me from my stupor. While talking with Pastor Larry Sequin (Calvary de Taos, Taos, NM), God's righteous conviction began to burn into my soul. I remember the exact verse that God used to execute His final blow of conviction just before His salvation. The blow left me never walking the same, talking the same nor acting the same. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 *"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."* My life has never been the same.

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Today –

Although I am not perfect, I am a new creation in Christ Jesus. Praise be to God that He convicts me in my weaknesses and convicts me through His word. I desire that my will comes into full alignment with His will. God has placed in me a desire to seek His fullness and glorify Him in all that I do. I may fail, but I will not remain as a failure. My prayer is that God continues to convict me of my unrighteousness and that I bless His name for it. It is my prayer that I always follow hard after God and be sanctified through His Spirit. It is my prayer that God holds me to the accountability as He does Ezekiel (read Ezekiel chapter 3).

God why me?

Often I have asked this very question? I have many times said to the Lord, *“Lord how is it that you are using me in such ways? I don’t have a clue what I am doing? I think you have the wrong man. O’ Lord help me!”* Truth is the Lord can use *rocks* and *donkeys* to speak for Him. For the last couple of years, the Lord has brought all types of people my way. He has brought the homeless, addicts, demon oppressed and possessed. He has brought the sick, the tired and the weary. More times than not, He has brought men my way. Not just any men, but men who profess to be Christians.

Challenge to introspect –

Test yourself and see if Christ Himself is indeed a reality in your life. If so, live in the reality of having been saved. The reality of experiencing Christ’s

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conversion is to be, as a style of life, about the Father's business and in unison with the Holy Spirit. It is good, quite literally, to pray and mourn for the souls of the lost. When mourning comes to an end, go out with the full gospel of truth and fight hell over those souls, expecting to win. Good biblical preaching is a warring with hell, preaching with uncontrolled passion, speaking boldly in the Spirit, declaring the full gospel and pleading for souls to repent. Anything short of this is worldly, of the flesh and a disgrace to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I highly urge all believers to spend much time with the Lord over Matthew 7:21-23. These words of Christ are a warning to every professing believer! May these words never be spoken of you, "...*I never knew you.*" The only assurance you have in your Christian salvation is this, are you walking in the newness of the Lord Jesus Christ today, right now? Is the hope, the living Christ, indeed in you? Examine yourself – unless you are afraid that the truth is not in you – 2 Corinthians 13:5. Do you know Him, or just know of Him?

*"Two things I ask of thee; deny them not to me before I die:
Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty
nor riches; feed me with food that is needful for me, lest I be full,
and deny thee, and say, 'Who is the LORD?' or lest I be poor,
and steal, and profane the name of my God."⁴⁰⁷*

⁴⁰⁷ Proverbs 30:7-9

~ ***Previous books*** ~

Urgency to Rise – a call to the American ‘church’

Limiting God?

Limiting Spiritual Maturity?

~ ***Author’s Current Reading*** ~

The Bible – there is no substitute

Beyond Radical by: Gene Edwards

Select Sermons of George Whitefield

George Whitefield Journals

Revolution in World Missions by: K.P. Yohannan

Tortured for Christ by: Richard Wurmbrand

*Trojan Church – The New Age Corruption of the Evangelical
Faith by: Dr. Gregory R. Reid*

*Life Together – The Classic Exploration of Faith in
Community by: Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

*The Practice of the Presence of God
by: Brother Lawrence*

*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God
by: Jonathan Edwards*

~ *A special thanks* ~



Cover:

A special thanks to: (from left to right)
Katie Snavely, Eric “*whooh hbooh*” Snavely and Matt
Roberts.

You guys are wonderful family and friends in the Lord
Jesus Christ!

~ Final quote ~

“Give me leave to ask you, in the presence of God, whether you know the time, and if you do not know exactly the time, do you know there was a time, when God wrote bitter things against you, when the arrows of the Almighty were within you? Was ever the remembrance of your sins grievous to you? Was the burden of your sins intolerable to your thoughts? Did you ever see that God’s wrath might justly fall upon you, on account of your actual transgressions against God? Were you ever in all your life sorry for your sins? Could you ever say, My sins are gone over my head as a burden too heavy for me to bear? Did you ever experience any such thing as this? Did ever any such thing as this pass between God and you soul? If not, for Jesus Christ’s sake, do not call yourselves Christians; you may speak peace to your hearts, but there is no peace. May the Lord awaken you, may the Lord convert you, may the Lord give you peace, if it be his will, before you go home!”

“When the sinner is first awakened, he begins to wonder – How came I to be so wicked? The Spirit of God then strikes in, and shows that he has no good thing in him by nature; then he sees that he is altogether gone out of the way, that he is altogether become abominable, and the poor creature is made to lie down at the foot of the throne of God, and to acknowledge that God would be just to damn him, just to cut him off, though he never had committed one actual sin in his life. Did you ever feel and experience this, any of you – to justify God in your damnation – to own that you are by nature children of wrath, and that God may justly cut you off, though you never actually had offended him in all your life? If you were ever truly convicted, if your hearts were ever truly cut, if self were truly taken out of you, you would be made to see and feel this. And if you have never felt the weight of original sin, do not call yourselves Christians. I am verily

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persuaded original sin is the greatest burden of a true convert; this ever grieves the regenerate soul, the sanctified soul. The indwelling of sin in the heart is the burden of a converted person; it is the burden of a true Christian. He continually cries out, 'O! who will deliver me from this body of death', this indwelling corruption in my heart? This is that which disturbs a poor soul most. And, therefore, if you never felt this inward corruption, if you never saw that God might justly curse you for it, indeed, my dear friends, you may speak peace to your hearts, but I fear nay, I know, there is no true peace."

"Further: before you can speak peace to your hearts, you must not only be troubled for the sins of your life, the sin of your nature, but likewise for the sins of your best duties and performances. When a poor soul is somewhat awakened by the terrors of the Lord, then the poor creature, being born under the covenant of works, flies directly to a covenant of works again. And as Adam and Eve hid themselves among the trees of the garden, and sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness, so the poor sinner, when awakened, flies to his duties and to his performances, to hid himself from God, and goes to patch up a righteousness of his own. Says he, I will be mighty good now – I will reform – I will do all I can; and then certainly Jesus Christ will have mercy on me. But before you can speak peace to your heart, you must be brought to see that God may damn you for the best prayer you ever put up; you must be brought to see that all your duties – all your righteousness – as the prophet elegantly expresses it – put them all together, are so far from recommending you to God, are so far from being any motive and inducement to God to have mercy on your poor soul, that he will see them to be filthy rags, a menstruous cloth – that God hates them, and cannot away with them, if you bring them to him in order to recommend you to his favour. My dear friends, what is there in

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our performances to recommend us unto God? Our persons are in an unjustified state by nature: 'They that are in the flesh cannot please God.' You may do things materially good, but you cannot do a thing formally and rightly good; because nature cannot act above itself. It is impossible that a man who is unconverted can act for the glory of God; he cannot do anything in faith, and 'whatsoever is not of faith is sin'."

"Our best duties are as so many splendid sins. Before you can speak peace in your heart, you must not only be made sick of your original and actual sin, but you must be made sick of your righteousness, of all your duties and performances. There must be a deep conviction before you can be brought out of your self-righteousness, you cannot come to Jesus Christ."

"But then, before you can speak peace to your souls, there is one particular sin you must be greatly troubled for, and yet I fear there are few of you think what it is; it is the reigning, the damning sin of the Christian world, and yet the Christian world seldom or never think of it. And pray what is that? It is what most of you think you are not guilty of – and that is, the sin of unbelief."

"I appeal to your own hearts, if you would not think me uncharitable, if I doubted whether any of you believed in Christ; and yet, I fear upon examination, we should find that most of you have not so much faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the devil himself. I am persuaded the devil believes more of the Bible than most of us do."⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁸ George Whitefield – *Select Sermons of George Whitefield*, pgs 81-84 – Reprinted 1997, The Banner of Truth Trust, 3 Murrayfield Road, Edinburgh EH12 6EL; PO Box 621, Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013, U.S.A.

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‘They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.’⁴⁰⁹

“Most of you, if you examine your hearts, must confess that God never yet spoke peace to you; you are children of the devil, if Christ is not in you, if God has not spoken peace to your heart. Poor soul! What a cursed condition are you in. I would not be in your case for ten thousand, thousand worlds. Why? You are just hanging over hell. What peace can you have when God is your enemy, when the wrath of God is abiding upon your poor soul? Awake, then, you that are sleeping in a false peace, awake, ye carnal professors, ye hypocrites that go to church, receive the sacrament, read your Bibles, and never felt the power of God upon your hearts; you that are formal professors, you that are baptized heathens; awake, awake, and do not rest on the bottom. Blame me not for addressing myself to you; indeed, it is out of love to your souls. I see you are lingering in your Sodom, and wanting to stay there; but I come to you as the angel did to Lot, to take you by the hand. Come away, my dear brethren – fly, fly, fly for your lives to Jesus Christ, fly to a bleeding God, fly to a throne of grace; and beg of God to break your hearts, beg of God to convince you of your actual sins, beg of God to convince you of your original sin, beg of God to convince you of your self-righteousness – beg of God to give you faith, and to enable you to close with Jesus Christ. O you that are secure, I must be a son of thunder to you, and O that God may awaken you, though it be with thunder; it is out of love, indeed, that I speak to you . I

⁴⁰⁹ Jeremiah 6:14 – The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1946-52, 1971, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

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know by sad experience what it is to be lulled asleep with a false peace; long was I lulled asleep, long did I think myself a Christian, when I knew nothing of the Lord Jesus Christ. I went perhaps farther than many of you do; I used to fast twice a-week, I used to pray sometimes nine times a-day, I used to receive the sacrament constantly every Lord's-day; and yet I knew nothing of Jesus Christ in my heart, I knew not that I must be a new creature – I knew nothing of inward religion in my soul.

*I hope God does not intend to let me preach in vain; I hope God will reach some of your precious souls, and awaken some of you out of your carnal security; I hope there are some who are willing to come to Christ, and beginning to think that they have been building upon a false foundation.*⁴¹⁰

~ George Whitefield ~

⁴¹⁰ George Whitefield – *Select Sermons of George Whitefield*, pgs 90-91 – Reprinted 1997, The Banner of Truth Trust, 3 Murrayfield Road, Edinburgh EH12 6EL; PO Box 621, Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013, U.S.A.

~ *Closing thoughts* ~

Before salvation, all people once served the prince of this world. Following the prince of this world means we are at enmity with God; we are at war with God; we sin against God. If it were not for the longsuffering and love of God, no man would be spared. In our war against God, He deals with us so very lightly. His *war strategy* is to bring us into a right standing with Himself, through the atoning work of His Son, the Christ, upon the cross and through the *cup of wrath* that His Son drank.

As we are awakened to His truths, full submission on our part is required, not that it is in our own power, but that we are each given the understanding of who we are and where our destination is apart from Christ. True salvation brings us into the predestined plan of God which was “*set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*”⁴¹¹ This is to say, “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*”⁴¹²

But to those who refuse the Christ and refuse to acknowledge God for who He is,⁴¹³ for He has made himself known and no one has excuse,⁴¹⁴ God gives them over to “*the lusts of their hearts,*”⁴¹⁵ “*up to dishonorable passions,*”⁴¹⁶ and “*up to a debased mind to do what ought not to*

⁴¹¹ Ephesians 19b-10

⁴¹² John 3:16

⁴¹³ Romans 1:21-22

⁴¹⁴ Romans 1:20

⁴¹⁵ Romans 1:24

⁴¹⁶ Romans 1:26

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be done."⁴¹⁷ To these people he will not sit with nor consort with.⁴¹⁸ God not only hates the assembly of those who do evil,⁴¹⁹ He hates "*all evildoers.*"⁴²⁰

Do not run from one side of the spectrum to the other. It is not grace verses works – no! Rather run to the Christ, stay with the Christ and live in the Christ; preach nothing but the Christ; boast only of the Christ.

And this we are not being told!

⁴¹⁷ Romans 1:28

⁴¹⁸ Psalm 26:4

⁴¹⁹ Psalm 26:5

⁴²⁰ Psalm 5:5

~ *Closing prayer* ~

Oh God, what happened to the preaching of the old days? Why has the preaching changed O' Lord? Where have the days gone when you poured your Spirit out upon men who stand in the pulpit and when you led men to confession and repentance of their atrocities against you? How will men be saved if you do not save them?

Oh God, men have traded your wisdom in for the filthy riches and culture of this world. Men are dressing up in white washed rags of righteousness and works of the flesh. They appear as children of light but they refuse to admit their inherent depravity. These men claim to be in your name and claim to love in your name, but O' Lord, they use the culture as an excuse to distort your word and your truth. They have all become ignorant of your Spirit and a deceived multitude has esteemed the *wolves* on high. These godless self-serving false teachers use every excuse to deny your true attributes. Their excuses only provide evidence that they are ashamed of your Son.

They preach not His fullness. The Scriptures that have been, and ever will be, that which points us to the Son for salvation, yet no one expresses your fullness. Cultural relevance has become our deceptive god of truth. We are blind and have selective hearing. O' Lord, what has happened to the men who used to weep and cry and call out to you for the salvation of people's souls? Why are their eyes no longer wet, and their knees no longer blood stained?

O' God, you do not change! There is no new sin under heaven. Who are we to determine your truth

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is not relevant enough? We have committed the greatest sin – we have blasphemed your Holy Spirit. In the name of faith we have denied faith. Have mercy on us Holy Father.

Amen.

Take your eyes off of figuring out every detail of the second coming; take your eyes off of the search for the anti-christ; take your eyes off of yourself...

instead...

...turn your eyes upon the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

The only assurance you have when the days get hard, when the persecution haunts, and the sin within pulls you down, is the answer to the question...

...are you walking with Him, in Him and by Him today?

The only assurance you have is today, here and now...

Are you in Him? Does He *know* your name? Are you His?

Is Christ your style of life?

~ 1 Peter 4:16-18 ~

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